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IMAGE, THEME, AND PATTERN IN THE WORKS OF MARTHA OSTENSO

BY

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Image, Theme, and Pattern in the Works of Martha Ostenso", submitted by Stanley C. Stanko, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I have divided the works of Martha Ostenso into three groups, according to plot structure and time orientation. Within each group, I explore the dominant figures, themes, images, and structural patterns of the works, and I indicate the major developments in that group.

Chapter One outlines my method of dealing with Ostenso's works, and involves a consideration of previous criticism and an attempt to place her in the milieu of the 1920's. In Chapter Two, I discuss the works dealing with the tyrant and guilt figures, the themes of love, death, and destiny, and the images of the land, the dream, and the prison-house. The mythic pattern of decline and fall is explored in Chapter Three, through the figures of the patriarch-criminal and the images of the land, water, the swamp and the hill, houses, birds, trees, and flowers. The themes of destiny, the integration of personality, and the theme that life must go on, inform this group. Chapter Four is a discussion of the vital male and creative female figures, embodiments of Ostenso's concept of the life-force, of the themes of time, the integration of personality, and death, and of the images of the land and the dream.

Ostenso's fundamental concern with the integration of personality, her structural devices of duality and repetition, and the same locales, the farm and the small town, knit the works into an organic whole. Chapter Five discusses these elements, as well as Ostenso's limitations and accomplishments as a novelist.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Wild Geese: WG.

The Dark Dawn: DD.

The Mad Carews: MC.

The Young May Moon: TYMM.

The Waters Under the Earth: TWUTE.

Prologue to Love: PTL.

There's Always Another Year: TAAAY.

The White Reef: WR.

The Stone Field: SF.

The Mandrake Root: TMR.

Love Passed This Way: LPTW.

O River, Remember!: ORR.

Milk Route: MR.

The Sunset Tree: ST.

A Man Had Tall Sons: AMHTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In addition to Wild Geese (1925), her most acclaimed novel, Martha Ostenso wrote some fourteen novels and eighteen short stories, as well as a book of poetry and a biography of Sister Elizabeth Kenny, neither of which will be dealt with here. Although none of her works subsequent to Wild Geese received the same recognition, they are all concerned with the same basic problems: life on the Great Plains of Canada and the United States, and the problem of the realization of one's total personality in that environment. In this essay, I propose to examine these major concerns through an analysis of the images, themes, and structural patterns of the individual works and their relationship to one another.

To facilitate this study, I have chosen to classify the works with respect to plot, to the types of characters, and to the dominant time orientation of the works. Such a classification reveals that Ostenso's works form three distinct but interrelated groups, each of which will be dealt with in succeeding chapters of this essay. The first group, which I call "TYRANNY AND GUILT", deals with the physical or metaphorical destruction of the central character, who has controlled the lives of his family almost to the point of destroying them; and in this group, the present is the dominant time factor, for it is in the present that the problems of the family lie, and in which they must be solved. "DECLINE AND FALL" is the second group, wherein a large family,

pursued by a relentless fate, is ruined and a new beginning is necessitated, usually by means of a union between the remaining son of the family and his female counterpart outside the family. Here, the past is the dominant time factor, for it is the heritage of the past which creates the problem in the present, and it is the positive aspects of the heritage which must be reasserted in opposition to the negative aspects of that heritage before any new beginning can exist. The third group of works, "THE VITAL MALE AND THE CREATIVE FEMALE", has two central characters, both intimately linked to the land, and who are sexual and spiritual counterparts of the land and each other. These two figures are present in both the other classes, for they are really the means by which the pattern of decline and fall gives way to regeneration, and by which the power of the tyrant is destroyed. In this third group, however, these two figures receive their fullest attention; their parallel growth through various tests is followed in great detail. Although the future is the major time orientation in this class of novels, since the action of the central figures is always tempered by the future, past and present time also exist, blending with the future so that any rigorous separation of the three is difficult. If we are to speak of a time factor in this group of works, we must speak of timelessness, since past, present, and future converge here.

As can be seen by this very brief consideration of the groupings of Ostenso's works, certain mythic patterns, such as that of decline and fall, and certain mythic or archetypal figures, such as the tyrant, appear in Ostenso's novels and stories. In addition, as further analysis will show, certain explicit mythic figures appear in several

works, notably Caleb in Wild Geese, who is related both to Caliban and Adonis, and Luke and his sons in A Man Had Tall Sons, who are related to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These and other mythic elements in the works, notably the fact that almost without exception, the novels are knit together by the seasonal cycle, reveal that Ostenso is consciously constructing a framework within which she can deal with the problem of the realization of total personality in an environment which is hostile to this realization. A closer examination of this framework demonstrates that there are three levels on which it operates: reality, dream, and myth. On the level of reality, the characters and situations of the works can be viewed according to the standard of being true to life, the level on which Pacey and other critics examine the works. On the level of dream, the various characters can be interpreted as being aspects of one personality, a level which no critic has as yet seen in the works. On the third level, that of myth, the characters and situations can be seen, as has been mentioned, as having distinct relationships with various mythical figures, a level which again no critic has as yet seen in the works. It is on these last two levels, dream and myth, that I will examine the works, in an effort to show how Ostenso uses the concepts of psychology and the elements of myth to explore the problem of loneliness and fulfillment in a hostile environment.

Martha Ostenso, like many North American novelists of her period, is deeply concerned with man's attempts to come to terms with the loneliness and sense of loss he feels, a solitude and a separation which is not only internal, but external as well, for the psychological and

spiritual wilderness he is lost in is manifest in the physical wilderness around him. Any extensive survey of the inter-war and post-war periods is outside the scope of this essay, but a brief look at Ostenso's antecedents and contemporaries will demonstrate that she shares deeply in their concern with man's essential loneliness.

As both Desmond Pacey¹ and Carlyle King² have pointed out, Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925) was published at the time when the "Sunshine School" of Canadian literature was in vogue, which concerned itself mainly with historical romances and regional idylls. There was a growing trend away from this type of literature toward something more realistic, such as Salverson's The Viking Heart (1923), Grove's Settlers of the Marsh (1925), and Stead's Grain (1926). Wild Geese contributed to this trend, which was continued by Grove and Callaghan, but the fact that Ostenso moved to the United States soon after the publication of the novel, and consequently could not be considered as a Canadian novelist per se, removed her, according to Pacey, from the mainstream of Canadian literature.³ This fact, however, is not particularly relevant, for the locale of Ostenso's novels is the Great Plains area of Canada and the United States, so that the experience Ostenso discusses is, on a realistic level, common to both nations and is, ultimately, a universal one. Ostenso's change in residence did not alter the themes of her novels, for she continued, like Grove and Callaghan, to be concerned with the conflict of the individual and his environment, and also continued to develop a consistent philosophical and technical framework for her ideas. And, like Callaghan, her novels became increasingly symbolic as her vision expanded and matured, even though the

general locales of her novels did not alter substantially.

Ostenso's immediate American antecedents are Cather, Glasgow, and Dreiser, who are all concerned with the function of primitive instincts in a civilized society. But she is not simply a primitivist or a naturalist, even though for her as for these writers, instinct takes precedence over man-made values, and people are controlled by forces much more powerful than their own wills. Ostenso parts company with them in her belief that the instincts which motivate her characters must not be those of ruthless desire in all its forms. For Ostenso, the belief that vitality belongs to those who are close to the earth and sterility to those who are not, is modified by her feeling that those who return to nature must undergo a period of physical, spiritual, or psychological suffering before they can be rejuvenated by love and fulfill their personalities, in order that they may play out their destinies. Those who fail the test of suffering become, like Dorinda in Glasgow's Barren Ground (1925) and Caleb, in Ostenso's Wild Geese, sterile because their strength is devoted to endurance and control rather than love.

Like Grove, Dreiser, Lewis, Anderson, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway, Ostenso was a part of the renaissance of Mid-Western writers who formed the core of the significant literature of the inter-war years. And like them, she shares the same thematic and philosophical concerns. The strong-willed characters who are forced to obey the dictates of biological or economic necessity by some power which they do not understand find their expression in the works of Grove and Dreiser and also in the early works of Ostenso. The smug self-righteousness and hypoc-

risiness which so infuriated Lewis in Main Street (1920) also infuriates Ostenso in The Young May Moon (1927), but instead of satirizing these characteristics of the small town, Ostenso examines with great psychological insight the effects of the "Main Street" mentality on a highly sensitive young woman who is not a reformer but merely another human being who is trying to live a meaningful life amid the warped, frustrated, and guilt-ridden people of the town. Like Anderson, Ostenso investigates the estrangement from self and others, the escapes that attempt to cure or disguise the essential isolation wrought by internal or external circumstances, and like him, she condemns those who merely accept the normalcy which passes for fruitful existence. In her later novels in particular, Ostenso explores the masks her characters put on in order to hide the truth of their emptiness from themselves.

Another Mid-Westerner whose greatest novel appeared in the same year as Wild Geese was F. Scott Fitzgerald who, in The Great Gatsby, investigated what was to become one of Ostenso's favourite figures--the dreamer; one of her favourite images--the dream; and one of her favourite themes--the repetition of the past. Jay Gatsby has a counterpart in Matt Welland, of The Waters Under the Earth (1930). Both men are dreamers, both are powerful (although Matt's power does not extend much beyond his family), and the tension between the desire to wield power and the desire to fulfill a dream is intensively explored in both novels, a tension which Lionel Trilling sees as a symbol of America itself.⁴ It is interesting to note that while Jay is ultimately destroyed, Matt continues to live under the impression that both his power and his dream are equally viable.

Fitzgerald is among those writers considered to be of the "lost generation", and in their investigation of the aloneness of man, they present, on a larger canvas, what is seen to be Ostenso's major theme. Hemingway, particularly in his emphasis upon man confronting elemental nature and his assertion of the will to live, is exploring on foreign soil what Ostenso explores at home in novels like The Mandrake Root (1938) and The Sunset Tree (1949). Thomas Wolfe, in Look Homeward, Angel is, like Ostenso, concerned with the quest for identity, for roots, for home, and indeed, the images of roots and home are among Ostenso's basic ones, as is the image of the ghost, particularly the ghost of the father, in The Waters Under the Earth (1930) and Love Passed This Way (1942). And in her tendency to mythologize the characters and events of her works, Ostenso is solidly in the mainstream of American literature.

Previous scholarship has tended to ignore not only Ostenso's total corpus and her relation to other writers, but has concentrated primarily upon only one novel, Wild Geese, possibly because it won the \$13,500 Dodd, Mead, & Co. prize for the best first novel of 1925. This previous scholarship is of three main types: passing mention in literary histories, a few desultory articles, and several book reviews. Remaining critical material is primarily concerned with biographical detail and chronological lists of her works. In all these treatments of Martha Ostenso's works, the dominant emphasis is upon the categorization of her as a realist, a romanticist in the sense of sentimentality, or a melodramatist, and most of these labels are based primarily upon the evidence of only one novel: Wild Geese. Except for reviews

of each work, the remaining fourteen novels have been largely ignored. Only Desmond Pacey and Grant Overton have considered these works, but not in any detail. Both are, however, among those who call Ostenso a realist, based solely on their judgments of Wild Geese.

Pacey, in his Creative Writing in Canada, defines realism to include those novels which "are...more sombre in tone...probe more deeply into the lives of their characters...treat more intensively the social environment and...are less given to sentimental and romantic evasions".⁵ In addition, Pacey points out that novel of this type seek "to record and interpret the processes of ordinary life".⁶ Unlike several other critics and reviewers, Pacey has defined his terms and proceeds to analyze Wild Geese accordingly; but due, perhaps, to the limitations of space, his analysis does not extend much beyond saying that the novel has "powerful characterization", "vivid description", a "sombre tone", and is "unified in structure".⁷ Later, in Literary History of Canada, Pacey somewhat amplifies his treatment, giving a plot summary of the novel and extending his earlier evaluation by saying that the "atmosphere is one of relentless tragic pressure", and that the three elements of time, place, and action are "fused into a single amalgam of harsh power".⁸ Pacey's treatment of Wild Geese is apt but limited, for the very nature of the publication in which it appears forces him to restrict his comments to the most obvious characteristics and merits.

Grant Overton, in his Women Who Make Our Novels, after a lengthy biographical sketch of Ostenso, also says that Ostenso is a realist, but he introduces another term which has been accepted by reviewers and

critics alike and used to dismiss many of her later novels. Overton points out that while Wild Geese creates to perfection "a form of imagined life, clearer than reality", the novel becomes very melodramatic toward the close".⁹ Although Overton qualifies his remarks by pointing out that the logic of the novel demands such an ending, since, as both he and Pacey point out, the aura of tragedy pervades the novel's atmosphere, later reviewers and critics have neglected to examine why Ostenso's novels contain melodramatic elements. Among these is Carlyle King who, in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of Wild Geese, says that even though the ending does provide the novel with its "most exciting and powerfully written scene", it is nevertheless among the "obvious weaknesses" of the book.¹⁰

King cites six "obvious weaknesses" in Wild Geese: the point of view is not consistent, for we watch the tyranny of the Gare household with the eyes of the schoolteacher, Lind Archer, but yet we are also given glimpses of the inner natures of several other characters. King goes on to say that there are lapses into sentimentality, "as in the statement that 'the soft wind moved in his [Caleb's] scrag of hair, and in the invisible touch there was a gesture of infinite pity'".¹¹ The love story involving Lind and Mark Jordan is "peripheral", "tepid and conventional", and "there is a certain amount of high-falutin or priggish talk between these lovers".¹² And that Mark Jordan, who is the illegitimate son of Amelia, Caleb's wife, and is Caleb's major weapon in his arsenal of tyranny, should leave his job as an architect and come to a neighboring farm for a rest and a cure of his illness, is "contrived", according to King. Further, he finds the ending of the

novel melodramatic. A complete refutation of these charges is not possible, for King has pointed out some of the flaws of a first novel: the conversations are at times artificial, there are shifts in point of view, and the structure of the novel's actions is, on the surface at least, contrived in many places. However, I shall attempt to defend the essential integrity of the artist in the later pages of this essay. What is important for the moment is that King's analysis is limited by the all-too-common flaw in commentary upon Martha Ostenso's works: the failure to examine, in detail, why the author introduces elements which, although they lend themselves to being labelled as "sentimental" and "melodramatic", are nevertheless absolutely essential within the framework of the novels.

One of the major criticisms of her works centers on her treatment of characters. To these critics, exaggeration, sentimentality, puppeteering, stereotyping, and artificiality in both conception and execution of character render the novels "repetitious and obvious",¹³ mere reworkings of the "stock figures of romance".¹⁴ Ostenso's handling of plots is no less flawed: seemingly inexplicable reversals in action, shallowness, imbalances in plot and character necessitating "plotty" extrications from unconvincing situations, predetermination of plot to ensure a "happy ending",¹⁵ and purely melodramatic action elicit comments like "theatrical touches" which make the novels "light and fairly entertaining" love stories or "pleasant little romances",¹⁶ hardly a cut above penny dreadfuls and dime-store paperbacks. A detailed refutation of these claims is not possible within the limits of this essay, but the analysis contained hereinafter in itself constitutes a denial

of these charges and an expansion of their frames of reference to point out what all of these critics and reviewers have failed to do: what is the purpose of the elements which are being criticized, over and above the purely commercial one of immediate appeal?

That all of those who have written about Ostenso's works in any detail have touched upon highly significant elements is not disputed; what is disputed is that they have remained content with labelling and consequently dismissing them as "stock" images, themes, characters, settings, and plots. Even Pacey goes so far as to say that all Ostenso's subsequent novels are merely "unsuccessful attempts to repeat her own achievement in Wild Geese".¹⁷ But neither Pacey nor any of the other critics and reviewers has examined what elements are repeated and why. If she is realistic, then why can she be charged with being "romantic", "sentimental", or "melodramatic"? What constitutes the "romantic" in her novels? Why does there seem to be elements and overtones of melodrama in the novels? Clearly, these questions must be dealt with before any judgment can be made on Ostenso's works, and the method of answering these questions must be through the very stuff of the novels: the images, themes, and patterns of the works.

To classify Ostenso as a realist has some merits; she is realistic not only in the conventional sense, as Pacey has pointed out on the evidence of only one novel, but in a far more profound sense as well. All the novels deal with basic psychological problems: the emancipation of children, resulting in an investigation of infantile Oedipal and Electra complexes; the conflict of the generations; the question of dreams and aspirations in a "primitive setting", to use

Pacey's term; the problem of guilt and expiation; and so on, in addition to the day-to-day problems of life.

Regarding "romance", in the sense that the reviewers use it, that is, as sentimental and somewhat puerile love stories, one can say that all the novels deal with love stories, but they are neither those of the True Confession type, nor of the Romance Library sort. They are love stories, romances, in the sense that they are concerned with the experience, and not just the appearance, of love. The intimate relationship between love and hate, the destructive and creative aspects of love, the consequences of frustrated love, the questions of impotence and virility, sterility and fecundity, spiritual love and physical love, and the manifold problems and implications of the contact and content of masculine-feminine relationships, are explored in great detail in the novels. Further, the novels are also concerned with sensitivity in all its forms, the role of the dreamer-poet figure being of prime importance. There are also elements of literary romanticism in the works: the exploration of consciousness; of unconsciousness in its manifestations of guilt and desire; the role of external nature in human life; the exploration of loneliness, social ostracism, the power of society and history in shaping the human personality; and a very complex exploration of the quest theme.

Beyond these and other "romantic" elements involving the exploration of various feeling states, images drawn from external nature, and of various technical devices, lies yet another stratum in the works, what the reviewers and critics call "melodrama". None of the commentators who use this term have bothered to define what they mean by it,

but it is clear that they mean it in its most disparaging sense: the sensational development of plot, with little regard for convincing motivation, appealing constantly to the emotions of the reader, in order to achieve a particular emotional or didactic purpose. But in order to determine whether or not an action or a character is melodramatic, we must examine its place in the total framework of the novel. The death of Caleb in the muskeg has been judged to be melodramatic. Having devoted his efforts to the raising of a flax field, Caleb discovers that it is on fire and, in trying to save it, he recklessly runs across a stretch of muskeg and is trapped. Rumpelstiltskin-like, he sinks into the ground to which he has devoted his whole life. On the surface, such a broad irony would seem to be melodramatic, but thus to dismiss it is to miss its significance in the novel. Caleb is the symbol of the land in one of its aspects--tyranny. The novel itself begins in the spring and ends in the fall. These two points alone are sufficient evidence for saying that the end of Caleb, whose name has its relationship with Caliban, is much more than mere melodrama: his life borders on the mythic. He is an earth deity, and within the novel, he tyrannizes his family in order that his land may prosper. His death, seen in this context, is not only dramatic, but inevitable: the year must come to an end; the land must lie fallow. A closer examination of Wild Geese, which occurs in a later chapter, reveals that what at first appears to be melodrama is much more than that; it borders on myth.

Ostenso's melodrama is more than black villains, snow white heroines, and golden heroes; it incorporates the timeless figures and

themes of mythology. The themes of destiny, fate, eternal recurrence, evil, and good, run through the novels. "Primitive characters", to use Pacey's phrase, who are actually embodiments of primal impulses, populate the novels. "Primitive settings", to quote Pacey again, which are accurate portrayals of both external and internal reality, are the locales of all the novels. Violence, greed, lust, child-like purity and innocence, dreams, nightmares, fantasies, castles, enchanted hollows, sinister swamps, and many of the elements of melodrama and fairy tales recur in the works, forming a complex organic whole revolving about one of the basic problems of human existence--the quest for wholeness, for identity, for fulfillment, in the face of internal and external chaos. All three terms, realism, romanticism, and melodrama, can be justly applied to the totality of Martha Ostenso's works, but these terms must be seen in their true perspective. Pacey was not far wrong when he said that all of Ostenso's novels following Wild Geese were "repetitious", but far from being attempts at writing another prize-winning novel, they are telling the same story that has preoccupied man for centuries: the achievement of selfhood. The repetition which Pacey sees as one of the essential characteristics of Ostenso's work is not governed by the desire for success; rather it is a thematic repetition of a broad vision of life. We turn now to an examination of that vision through the images, themes, and structural patterns of the works themselves.

CHAPTER TWO

TYRANNY AND GUILT

Through the use of the mythic figure of the tyrant, Ostenso explores the basic problem which informs all her works: the integration of personality. The works dealing with tyranny can be divided into two groups, according to the object of the tyrannizing force. In the first groups of novels, the tyrannizing force is directed against others by the central figure, the tyrant. This tyrant group is comprised of Wild Geese (1925), The Dark Dawn (1926), The Waters Under the Earth (1930), O River, Remember! (1943), A Man Had Tall Sons (1958), and "The Odd Thousand" (Unpublished MS, n.d.).¹ The second group, comprises of The Young May Moon (1929), Milk Route (1948), and The Sunset Tree (1949), is concerned with the direction of the tyrannizing force inwards, on the part of the central figure whom I term the "introvert", or "guilt" figure. In both groups, similar plot structure, themes, auxiliary figures, images, and structural patterns appear, and taken together, these two groups comprise the bulk of Ostenso's work and are her fullest examination of the problem of the integration of personality, and of the nature and operation of the life-force, a force which is both creative and destructive, and which operates through all things, making of them an organic whole.

The basic plot structure of the works discussed in this chapter is essentially the same. The central figure commits a crime against the life-force before the work opens, and although he achieves certain

physical satisfactions from his crime, he becomes frustrated because he cannot achieve any significant spiritual satisfaction. At this point, the central figure becomes either tyrannical or introverted, depending upon the expression of his frustration. When it is expressed in a desire to dominate others, the central figure becomes a tyrant. If, on the other hand, his frustration finds its expression in a self-imposed isolation in an illusory world, he becomes a guilt figure. For both the tyrant and guilt figures, a catalyst is required to begin the process of eliminating the tyrant or the tyrannizing force, and it is on this process that the works discussed in this chapter focus.

This process, for the guilt figure, usually culminates in a return to the root cause of the tyrannizing force and a removal of it through a refusal to repeat the initial crime, but there are variations in the culmination of the process in the works concerned with the tyrant figure. A closer examination of the changing fate of the latter reveals a development of Ostenso's vision regarding the operation of the life-force for, in the last novel, A Man Had Tall Sons, the tyrant is neither physically destroyed, as he is in Wild Geese, and The Dark Dawn, nor is he merely accepted as being part of the scheme of things, as he is in The Waters Under the Earth, O River, Remember!, and "The Odd Thousand"; rather, he is able to transform his tyranny into benevolence through a confrontation with his crime. The shift in the fate of the tyrant figure from being the means to the integration of personality of others in the early works to achieving that integration himself in the last work, as well as the shift in emphasis from a concern with the tyrant and guilt figures in The Young May Moon and Milk Route to a concern

with only the guilt figure in The Sunset Tree, underlines the conclusion to the problem of integration reached by Ostenso through these works. The individual must come to terms with the life-force operating within himself as well as with the force as manifested in others, for that force operates through all things, binding them together in an organic whole which cannot tolerate for long any aberration or denial of it.

From the basic plot structure outlined above, three basic themes emerge, each made up of a duality, and expressed through the various figures, images, and patterns of the works. Since the central concern of the novels and stories discussed in this chapter revolves about the tyrant and guilt figures, each of the major themes is explored through these figures in some detail, and since this central concern is basically psychological, the images of the dream and the house (as symbol of the mind-body) are of paramount importance.

Directly related to the tyrant and guilt figures is the theme of love, made up of the sub-themes of frustration and fulfillment, and explored in the images of the land and the dream. The theme of death is considered through the static and dynamic functions of death. In its static function, death signifies a state of inertia, explored through the various figures subjugated to the tyrant and the image of the prison house. In its dynamic function, death is seen to be the means to a new life, and this aspect is explored through the figures of the vital male and the creative female. The third theme is that of time and destiny, made up of the sub-themes of repetition and choice, and is expressed in the structural patterns of the works themselves. Each of these themes is ultimately related to Ostenso's conception of

the life-force, and each is actually a facet of that force. Thus the works discussed in this chapter provide a detailed portrayal of Ostenso's vision of the life-force, and the process of self-discovery and self-realization which occurs first within others and, finally, in A Man Had Tall Sons, within the tyrant himself, a process which occurs when that force is encountered and reacted to by the tyrant and guilt figures.

The theme of frustration finds its fullest expression in the tyrant figure who is, like Luke Darr of A Man Had Tall Sons, "only half the man [he] used to be".² This fragmentation is the basic characteristic of the tyrant figure, and arises out of the crime he had committed against the life-force. The details of the crime vary with the tyrant figure, but the essential element in the crime is the same: the failure to make the correct choice between the creative and destructive potential of the life-force. Instead of pursuing both his physical and spiritual inclinations to their conclusion, thereby realizing the creative potential of the life-force, the tyrant figure satisfies either his physical or his spiritual nature. The denial of one half of his nature does not mean that the tyrant has successfully eliminated that facet from his personality; rather, the denied half manifests itself in two objective ways, through his physical characteristics and his manner of rule. If the tyrant has denied the spiritual and has accentuated the physical element of his nature, he rules by physical force, and appears to be physically stunted. If, on the other hand, he has denied the physical element of his nature and accentuated the spiritual, then

he rules by spiritual force, most often evidenced by his religious zeal, which is usually directed against the worldly aspirations of the lives of his children. An analysis of the tyrant figures according to the physical characteristics and method of rule reveals the theme of frustration, in great detail, a theme directly related to the problem of the integration of a fragmented personality.

Common to all the male tyrants is their stunted appearance, for although they have large heads and shoulders, the lower part of their bodies is disproportionately small. Caleb, for example, has "tremendous shoulders and [a] massive head, which loomed forward from the rest of his body like a rough projection of rock from the edge of a cliff... [but] when attention was directed to the lower half of his body, he seemed visibly to dwindle".³ Matt Welland, in The Waters Under the Earth, has a large head, "so incongruously majestic upon his short body",⁴ and Luke Darr, in A Man Had Tall Sons, points to the significance of this incongruity by thinking that "the discrepancy in size between himself and his towering sons might have been a less irritating discomfort to him through the years had he been blessed with a daughter, fair like himself and petite, a child who would cling to him, look up to him. But Nature in her cynical disregard for her creatures had cheated him there" (10-11). The tyrant's physical size is a manifestation of his spiritual impotency, for although he may have physical or intellectual strength, and although he may father children, he is spiritually diseased, frustrated. In the discrepancy between the prim, almost severe dress of the female tyrants and their well-developed bodies is a parallel to the male tyrant's spiritual impotency.

Along with the physical incongruities of the tyrant figures is the incongruity of their voices which are startlingly persuasive, soft, and low, in direct contrast to their prepossessing physical appearances. This incongruity points to another characteristic of the tyrant: he is a hypocrite, manipulating words and people to suit his own ends. Furthermore, the persuasive quality of the voice demands obedience, revealing the tyrant's adherence to custom, law, and order, as well as his ability to control. Matt Welland's voice is spellbinding as he reads from the Bible, "Whoso strays from the common way findeth damnation" (25). And there is a danger in the tyrant's voice, as Luce Dorrit's reaction to Hattie Murker's singing in The Dark Dawn demonstrates: "she betrayed something in her singing that was not revealed in her controlled, level speaking voice....When Hattie sang he felt actually afraid of her"⁵ because Hattie's song is the song of the siren.

There is yet another incongruity which reveals the tyrant's life-denying function, that between his actual and his apparent age. Caleb is described as being "no older now than he ever was" (43), and Magdali Wing, of O River, Remember!, "will live forever--and trample on everybody forever",⁶ while Matt appears to be "a dead child who had somehow aged appallingly after he had died" (107). The tyrants deny change, an essential characteristic of time. Yet they are deeply scarred by the passage of time, well illustrated by the Dickensian technique of the characteristic gesture. It appears at times of stress, when some person or event evokes memories of the tyrant's crime, as is the case with Luke who, upon seeing many of his dead wife's possessions about, wonders "what other secrets...had Agatha taken with her to the

grave? He drew his upper lip against his teeth and twitched his nose in the way he was wont to do when he was confronted with a problem that embarrassed him" (26). The gesture also appears when the tyrant feels the life he suppresses poses a threat to his power. When Jude, Caleb's daughter, refuses to bow her head during the saying of grace, Caleb says to his wife, Amelia, "'Well--you go talk to Jude. See she looks to her manners. That young one is gettin' a sight too smart. Understand?' ... He ran his hand over his mustache..." (42). The gesture is a characteristic of neurosis, revealing the illness of the tyrant to be fixed and repetitive.

The tyrant's dehumanizing force is underlined by the almost boundless energy he devotes to consolidating and extending his material holdings. All the tyrant figures look upon their possessions as evidence of the realization of their dreams of power and control, and will, like Hattie, sacrifice anything, including her husband, to "'make this farm what it ought to be--and what father wanted it to be'" (80), because the tyrant needs "a sense of unbroken control that was as dear to her [Hattie] as life itself" (117). In fact, the tyrant's possessions are his life, becoming, like Hattie's stone house, "a living thing", or like Caleb's flax field, which he caresses stealthily, "more intimate than any [caress] he had ever given to a woman" (171). The tyrant's possessions then, are substitutes for human beings, like Jed Purdy's fields in "The Odd Thousand", to which he has become through the hot and turbulent years of his youth, husband and lover".⁷ And because the possessions have assumed the status of a loved one, the tyrant devotes himself and everyone else to it, alienating himself from the human love

he unconsciously yearns for yet hopes to find in his possessions. Ultimately, the tyrant must face his crime, either by choosing to persist in it, as is the case with all the works concerned with the tyrant except A Man Had Tall Sons, or, as is the case with Luke in that novel, by choosing not his land or his ambitions, but his second wife. Luke, by undoing his crime through this decision, achieves freedom and can realize the full potential of the life-force as it operates within himself.

The key to the nature of this crime lies in the method each tyrant employs to achieve control over his environment, for the method of rule is directly related to the crime committed. Caleb Gare, in Wild Geese, and Hattie Murker, in The Dark Dawn, are tyrant figures who have opted for their physical natures. Caleb, in his youthful "passion of the blood", sought physical possession of Amelia. Frustrated in his desire for possession by the fact that Amelia continued to love her dead first love, Caleb married her out of revenge based on the belief that "life had done him an eternal wrong, which no deed of his own could over-avenge" (144). But he finds that although his control "achieved its ends...the spirit of her had ever eluded him" (16). Thus frustrated in his desire for revenge, Caleb not only tyrannizes his wife and family, but controls the community as well. Similarly, Hattie Murker sought the physical possession of Mons Torson, but having achieved this "love", her life is empty because "all the love she had ever known had come to her during one burning summer and had been squandered ruthlessly one throbbing night in autumn" (205). Having spent her capacity for love, she turns to revenge, resolving to be "victor over life--and

over Mons Torson" (172). She destroys Mons' brother and almost destroys his best friend, Luce Dorrit, whom she marries.

But control over persons intimately connected with them and over the surrounding community is insufficient for these tyrants; they still crave satisfaction for their frustrated love-urges, so they turn to substitute love-objects. In Caleb's case, the object is his flax field, and he "becomes absorbed with the process of growth on the land he owned, lending to it his own spirit like physical nourishment" (171). Hattie's love-object becomes the stone house, and as she builds it, she feels that "it was as if the new house were challenging her capacities, as if she were actually taking on a grandeur and consequence to match the gray stone pile" (206-207). But in exerting their control over their families and pouring their energies into their substitute love-objects, both figures become more fragmented, more dehumanized, for a vicious circle of destruction is created. The more frustrated these tyrants become in their desire to achieve the love they have lost, the more they exert their power over others, until this drive for power becomes an "insanity", an "unholy passion", that consumes them as they attempt to consume everything they touch.

In Dorcas Gunther of The Young May Moon and Matt Welland of The Waters Under the Earth, the spiritual facet of the tyrant's crime against the life-force is delineated. Both Dorcas and Matt have emphasized their spiritual natures, Dorcas through her desire for her son's love, and Matt through his desire for his brother's love. Frustrated in her desire by her son's marriage and his subsequent suicide, Dorcas seeks revenge on his wife, Marcia, for "Rolf had gone from Dorcas for-

ever--but Rolf still lived for this girl he had brought into the house as his wife. That mystical possession gnawed relentlessly at Dorcas Gunther's heart...".⁸ Matt too seeks revenge, for because of an inherent physical ineffectuality, Matt is unable to prevent an argument between his father and his brother over his brother's agnosticism and adultery, an argument which ends in his father's death of heart failure. Matt then turns against his brother, whom he had admired, and marries to forget and to ensure that his brother's crimes are not repeated in his own children.

In their desire to regain what is lost, both Dorcas and Matt deny the physical in themselves and others. Dorcas' garden is an example of the "dutifully risen growth" (27) which has its counterpart in her physical appearance, "hard, and cold, and gray, like the setting in of winter" (55). Dorcas' "passion for curbing growth, a passion for the prim patterns of denial" (73) is exceeded only by Matt's "blighting power", born of a "fear of living, fear of loving, fear of thinking--down in the wells of wonder--fear of the crucifying doubt of holy things. Terror of the mystery and power of the self" (97). Out of this fear, born of his frustrated love for his brother, Matt denies his children's attempts at living their own lives, replacing their yearnings by "a sinister inertia, bred in the bone, and fostered through a childhood fear of reality, of reverence for the phantasms of caution and respectability" (79). Matt, like the other tyrants, denies life, but his tyranny is the most pernicious form, as is evidenced by the thoughts of his son, Tom: "between Tom and the image of his true soul, Matt Welland stood...his own identity seemed to have receded farther and farther from

from him...the static shadow of his father's dominance weaving across it until he doubted that it had ever existed" (74). Not only does Matt's tyranny demand submission, but it ultimately destroys both body and soul, a "finality of all life...reaching out, inexorably, to gather them all in" (243). But this tyranny of the spirit is ultimately self-consuming, for the tyrant is "sealed up in a vessel of bigotry and fear, to be left alone...[to his] divinely ordained doom" (186), and cannot interfere with the reality about him for "if he ever did glimpse the facts, he shut his eyes upon them promptly so that his own increasingly mystic absorptions might not be disturbed" (118). The illusory worlds Dorcas and Matt have made out of their frustration and their denial of the physical consume them. Dorcas dies, "lying on her bed, seeing visions, talking to the God she believes in, and hearing him talk to her--talking to her son--" (243); and Matt, who had "always lived in the upper air of sterile illusion" (130), becomes the "happy, maudlin slave" of his daughter, Jenny.

Magdali Wing in O River, Remember!, and Luke Darr in A Man Had Tall Sons represent the culmination of Ostenso's examination of the tyrant figure. Magdali is the successful tyrant, driven, like Hattie, by a desire to continue her father's dream of power and wealth, of physical possession. Luke, on the other hand, is the unsuccessful tyrant, driven by his frustration to the brink of self-destruction. He draws away from this brink, seeing the nature of his crime and refusing to commit it again. In the figures of Magdali and Luke, Ostenso presents two alternate futures for the tyrant, futures whose existence is governed not by the fact that the tyrant is destructive, but rather

by the question of the value of the tyranny for the life-force.

Magdali uses both physical and spiritual methods to control her family, a manifestation of her negation of everything the life-force represents, except the ability to improve material existence. In marrying Ivar Wing in Norway to further her father's dream of wealth in the form of land acquisition, Magdali emphasizes the purely material aspect of life, indifferent to everything, including birth which, to her, is "an incident, nothing more", and death, which "Magdali would have looked upon...with the same detachment--an event of small moment in the inscrutable ways of the omnipotent God she professed to worship" (125). In her materialism, Magdali destroys both her children's non-materialistic hopes, dreams, and loves, as well as her children. Magdali becomes a "little principality", and is not destroyed because she "was too much for us all. She was always the strong one" (366), as her husband says. He adds, "but we must not forget--we had to have strong ones here when she came to the valley" (366), which is why Magdali is able to live, for her strength, although it destroyed many, did create civilization out of the wilderness.

This acceptance of the tyrant as a necessary part of the life-force is extended in A Man Had Tall Sons, for although Luke Darr, like Magdali, denies both the physical and spiritual elements of life, he too creates new life out of the destruction he causes. Like Magdali, Luke commits the crime of marrying for wealth, not love. In doing so, he sacrifices his dream of becoming a minister. Because of the ensuing frustration, "work as he might, and did, Luke had never succeeded in developing any real sense of proprietorship in the land...he had felt

himself somewhat less of a man every time he had to go to his wife on a question that had in any way to do with the placid acres upon which he lavished his vigor that they might bear fruit" (12-13).

Even after Agatha's death and his subsequent remarriage, Luke feels impotent, for not only is his dream of having "children of his own" (14) frustrated by his second wife's false pregnancy, but his dream of building a new church, a sublimation of his youthful desire to become a minister, is also frustrated, for Luke's plans are appropriated by another man who has the honesty to admit that his motives are personal and not altruistic. Luke's double frustration is heightened by the fact that he labors under the burden of physical and spiritual inferiority, constantly striving to prove that "Luke Darr was something more than the little man who worked the Pribble farm" (217).

In his overcompensation for his sense of inferiority, Luke "would sacrifice anything rather than admit defeat" (287), and he does. Because of his own fear of the physical, he separates his son and the crippled girl he loves; furthermore, because of his confidence in the power of faith-healing, he urges the girl to attend a revival meeting, seeing in the revivalist what he himself wanted to be. At the meeting, the girl dies and Luke's son commits suicide after setting fire to the church hall, the scene of his beloved's death. Luke, realizing his responsibility for these deaths, and seeing that in his fanatical pursuit of his frustrated dreams he has completely alienated himself from his family, thinks, "life at best was but a brief striving for final union with the eternal. John and Sally in their love for each other, Mark [his dead son] and his violin groping their way to-

gether through the darkness, Matt in his escapades grasping for any shield against his loneliness--all of them driven by an ineffable fear of being forever alone. Even Bess [his wife]..." (365). And as he holds the dahlia bulb, symbol of his dead wife, a plant which he wanted to destroy but which was preserved by his dead son, Luke "pressed it...and found it firm and full of life straining for a new birth.... The straining to be reborn was not imposed upon it from without. It was a living pulse from within" (367). Through the confrontation with his crime, the denial of life, Luke realizes that no one can stand alone, that life must go on,

Till, when the ties loosen--
All but the ties eternal--Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us,

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space, O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last (O Joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfill,
O soul.

We burst forth--that was it! A brighter light than he had ever known broke over Luke, dispelling all darkness (367).

Seeing that the impulse to regeneration of life is not an external imposition from without but an inner principle of the life-force, Luke understands that all his attempts at conquering his frustrations were denials of the life-force. So he returns the bulb to the earth, feeling that "the very air about him seemed to expand, the enclosing walls to move outward and away into limitless space. Life's brief hour blended into eternity" (367-68).

Luke, unlike Magdali and the other tyrant figures, faces his crime and refuses to repeat it again, and in doing so, he feels that "he was at last talking to a God who was very close" (368) because it

is the God of love, not the God whom he called upon to help him in the struggle of the "triumph of spirit over flesh" (194). By embracing love and not power, Luke makes good his feeling that "it was as if the Lord was giving me a second chance to become the man I might have been" (212), a feeling that he had upon his remarriage. For Luke, the spiritual element becomes a way to fulfillment, not a weapon against it.

In Luke, all the elements of the guilt figure are present, but whereas he expresses his frustration in terms of the domination of others, the female guilt figure expresses her frustration in terms of self-delusion. This self-delusion is the direct result of her basic crime against the life-force, the compromising of her nature for the sake of the desire for love. Unlike the tyrant figure, the guilt figure does not simply choose to satisfy one facet of her personality; rather, she submerges her entire personality for an illusory fulfillment, a fulfillment she sees in the love of another. But this submersion of identity traps her in a self-consuming cycle of frustration, for not only is the other person unable to return her love, but the guilt figure negates the only means to true fulfillment: her own identity. Each guilt figure, like each tyrant figure, is thus involved in a world without meaning which is created to compensate for a fundamental loneliness. Ultimately, the guilt figure, like the tyrant figure, must face this illusory world, and in doing so, confront her crime.

Marcia Vorse of The Young May Moon, Sheila Panker of Milk

Route, and Esther Clarke of The Sunset Tree are trapped in a meaningless, illusory world because they have sought fulfillment at the expense of their true selves. Marcia says, "'I've tried to forget books and poetry and pictures...if only Rolf will love me'" (38), and in her desire for love, "she had done her best to shape her life" (5) to the lives of her husband and his fanatically religious mother. Sheila Panker marries a man as guilt-ridden as herself, and is unable to find release in him from the recurrent nightmare of her lover's death and her murder trial, for he too wishes "for some retreat where the voices of the outer world would not reach him for at least a year".⁹ In trying to live down the stigma of crime, Sheila is determined to become a part of the "tight little community, as self-contained as an egg" (19). Similarly, Esther Clarke, having been jilted by an itinerant worker, feels that "for the rest of my days I'll be looking for you [her lover] and knowing you'll never come back",¹⁰ and, leaving her home to pursue a career as a singer, she becomes involved in a series of love affairs to satisfy her hunger for the love of that wanderer. And in order to sustain her quest for an illusory love, Esther lays "a foundation of pleasant fiction strong enough to bear the structure of ugly fact that was already building" (53), compromising her true nature by "keeping up the fable of her happiness and success" (77) in the face of the increasing sordidness of her life, plagued by feelings of guilt and fearful that her true nature, "'a small town kid chasing a will o' the wisp'" (158) will be revealed.

In their growing frustration, brought about by the increasingly unattainable dream of love and security, the guilt figures

isolate themselves from the real world, undergoing a self-imposed exile which becomes a self-imposed death. Marcia, having driven her husband to commit suicide by demanding the love he could not give, feels guilty for having caused his physical death and spiritual damnation and retreats to a world of illusion, "[sharing] her life with no one now-- except, of course, with Rolf, who was closer to her in these days than in her own life....Between her and the world she had known, shielding her now as he had never done in those days, stood Rolf Gunther" (46-47). Sheila too retreats to "a new world...created out of all the chaos of her past" (140-141), "[sealing] her mind against the encroachment of the outer world [and clinging] almost fiercely to the sense of remoteness from living within it" (140). Esther as well continues to weave the web of illusion about herself and her life, for the "memory of Danny O'Rourke was still a burning flame within her, a flame that would never die" (142). After changing her name to Ronda Cameron, a further attempt to disguise her true identity, Esther still lives in this illusory world. Through her marriage and the birth of her daughter, Ellen, Esther maintains the mask she has created for herself, and becomes overly protective toward her daughter, hoping to shield her from life, just as she has shielded herself from it.

But this world of illusion is ultimately self-destructive, as Paul Brule of The Young May Moon points out to Marcia, for she, like the other guilt figures, is actually "losing...interest in living... [going] to pieces, physically and morally, living a selfish, self-centered existence...never giving a thought to anyone else" (123-24). Marcia realizes that "that hard, incorruptible, central core of her

consciousness where the image of Rolf Gunther had lived had become now only a rigid and inflexible space, untouched. Vaguely, with some still unquenched part of her being...she felt a shudder of fear at this stoniness that possessed her" (281). And out of her fear of becoming a living corpse, Marcia returns to the place where she first met Rolf, becoming a "little girl again", discovering that after "she had spoke aloud the name of Rolf Gunther...only the hard little sound of a locust rode the silence. Nothing else was there...at the beginning of things...one had to go back to the beginning of things, always...else a memory would go on forever and forever, strong as a parasite graying the bloom of life" (297-98). Through her return to the spot at which she compromised her true nature for the sake of an illusory love, Marcia refuses to commit the same crime again, realizing that "Existence was all a weaving to and fro upon the same dim loom. One never escaped that" (298).

Unlike Marcia, Sheila cannot escape from the parasitic memory of her crime; her self-imposed isolation is destroyed when the shock of her husband's injuries in a labor dispute causes her to lose her child and to injure her hip, an injury which later develops into terminal cancer. Esther, on the other hand, does escape from the destructive flame of memory, but not until the desire of her daughter to marry an itinerant engineer forces her to admit the fact that she has "made up the pattern of [her] past" in order to conceal her true identity from her daughter, whom she sees as the reincarnation of herself. Esther returns to the spot at which she fell in love with the itinerant worker, Danny, and through her frustrated attempt to commit suicide, she comes

to accept the fact that she is Esther Clarke, not Ronda Cameron, that Danny is dead for her, and that she cannot protect her daughter from life any more than she could protect herself.

Through the tyrant and guilt figures, Ostenso explores the sub-themes of frustration and fulfillment, aspects of the theme of love which is one part of her conception of the life-force. In order for one to realize the creative potential of the force, one must find a love which will neither demand the sacrifice of one or both facets of the personality. Rather, that love must fulfill one's physical and spiritual natures, for true love recognizes no polarity, only unity, and demands only that one retain one's identity and face the operations of the life-force on the strength of that individuality.

In the various figures subjected to the tyrant, Ostenso further explores the nature of the life-force through its connection with death as a static, terminal state. Each of these figures partakes of the stasis which infects the tyrant, and ultimately grows to resemble him physically as well as spiritually, becoming, like him, a living corpse. Martin, in Wild Geese, for example, has the appearance of an "unfruitful old man" (36), although he is still young, laboring under the burden of his "subjected manhood". The emasculation Martin suffers is typical of all the males subjected to the rule of the tyrant, and is an emblem of a deeper, spiritual emasculation. Dave in The Waters Under the Earth realizes that he suffers from a profound inertia, but he can do nothing about it, for it "has usurped the place of the motive power of his being" and has so become a part of him that "the years had passed

over him and he had looked spell-bound upon their meaningless coming and going" (167), possessing a "paralyzed soul" and becoming "a boulder in a slow midstream" or "an anachronism, a sort of full-rigged wind-jammer, sailing the mythical seas of lost illusion. He had never come into any port of manhood from those dreams he had pursued when he was a boy...[and] he did not give a tinker's dam!" (166). Like Karsten in O River, Remember!, "a coward and a liar in his own heart" (260), the subjugated male always halts "somewhere short of completeness" (327) in everything he does, because, like Charlie in Wild Geese, he can see nothing that is not a reflection of the tyrant, and eventually, like Tom in The Waters Under the Earth, he feels that he is "a victim of a predestined impotence" (74).

The living death which the males subjected to the tyrant undergo is paralleled by the female figures who are also subjected to the tyrant. They, like Ellen in Wild Geese, not only become paralyzed, but become allied with the tyrant figure in an Electra-like situation, in which she always acts in accordance with the tyrant's wishes. The rationale for this situation is made explicit in Ellen, for "Caleb was her father, and any wrong that he had committed must, necessarily, reflect upon herself. Hence she strove to vindicate in her own mind Caleb's conduct of the lives and affairs on the farm" (191-92). But "in her struggle to do this she was driven farther and farther within herself" (192), unable to sever the infantile ties which bind her to her father, ties which "had overrun every other instinct like a choking tangle of weeds" (96). Her identity erased, the female becomes, like Jenny in The Waters Under the Earth, "worse than the old man ever

was" (165). Jenny, on the night of her elopement, "seemed to see her father's face, his gentle, lost eyes, the tears falling unrestrainedly down the withered ruddiness of his cheeks. 'Let the wicked forsake their ways...'..... The knowledge [of the betrayal of her father's love] dawned upon her like a baleful and frozen sun, like the dawn of death in the soul" (144). Like Ellen and Jenny, Olina of O River, Remember! chooses to remain with the tyrant rather than elope with her lover. All of these subjected females are unable to advance beyond the stage of infantile submission. In their inertia, they die alive, for the sanctuary which the tyrant provides is really a tomb wherein they are cut off from past and future, trapped in the present, cases of arrested development.

But the living death which these figures experience can be transformed into dynamic life, and through the figures of the vital male and the creative female, Ostenso explores the theme of death in its dynamic function. Like the figures subjugated to the tyrant, the vital male and the creative female are tied to the tyrant through a family bond and are thus subjugated to him as well. But unlike the other subjugated figures, the vital male and the creative female are able to break this bond and achieve their full individuality because they, like Jude in Wild Geese, represent the "embryonic ecstasy of all life" (35), and are, like Carlotta in The Waters Under the Earth, driven by "a passion for living" (310) which the subjugated figures do not possess. In addition, like Luce in The Dark Dawn, these figures feel that there is "something within...that had to get out, something

that was too great for these narrow fields" (38). But in order for the true self to assert its power, these figures must undergo a series of transformations--symbolic deaths--to achieve their independence, a series which culminates in the actual or metaphorical death of the tyrant.

Because she can see that "she was meant for better things" (16) than slaving for Caleb Gare, Jude, in *Wild Geese*, is able to rid herself of the psychological and physical ties that bind her to Caleb. In a secluded spot in the woods, Jude strips off her clothing and presses herself to the earth. Lying there, she senses "something forbiddenly beautiful, secret as one's own body" in the "freeness of the air, in the depth of the earth" (67). What she senses is her awakened consciousness of her own womanhood, and realizing this, she sees that "there could be no going back now into the darkness" of the tyranny of Caleb. Out of the knowledge that "the marvelous confusion and complexity of all the world had singled her out from the rest of the Gares", Jude feels that "she was no longer one of them" (67) and "bursting with hatred for Caleb", who is the emblem of the suppression of that knowledge, Jude lies rigid on the ground, finally relaxing and weeping "like a woman" (68). Jude the child dies here; Jude the woman is born. And in her encounter with Sven, her lover, in which they become "two stark, elemental forces striving for mastery over each other" (117), Jude is confirmed in her role as woman, a role tested in her attempt at physical release from Caleb by trying to murder him.

Jude's attempted murder fails, but while spread-eagled on the barn floor as punishment, physically humiliated, she comes to realize

that physical power is insufficient to conquer Caleb, that she is not "an animal, to be driven, and tied, and tended for the value of her plodding strength. She knew what beauty was, and love, and things in no way connected with the rude growth of the land" (275). Her former animal, "defiant beauty" gives way to "certain dogged look in her eyes" (314), for through the physical suffering Caleb has inflicted upon her, she has come to see that even her physical self is a weapon Caleb can use against her. She achieves release from this self, secure in the knowledge that "she belonged to another, clear, brave world of true instincts.... They [the Gares] were muddled, confused souls, not daring to live honestly. Living only for the earth, and the product of the soil, they were meager and warped" (332), because living only in the physical leaves them prey to Caleb's tyranny. With her knowledge of her true identity, Jude is able to elope with Sven, an event which helps to bring about the death of the tyrant, Caleb.

With Luce Dorrit of The Dark Dawn, the achievement of identity and freedom through physical and spiritual death is elaborated, and the relationship between those deaths and the infantile ties is more explicit. Luce, like Jude, desires to escape from the constriction of his life, but he is hampered not only by the presence of a tyrant, but by the fact that this tyrant is the manifestation of his basic weakness: fear of women. Both Luce and his father have been made cowards by Luce's mother, and soon after his father's death, Luce marries Hattie Murker because, even though she seduced him, he felt that it was his duty to marry her and thus make what he felt was a crime into a just act, for he had gone to her as a kind of evasion of responsi-

bility following his father's death. He soon realizes his mistake, for one evening, he looks at Hattie who "seemed to grow to a terrifying height, overpowering him. He thought suddenly of his mother and of how he had wanted to run away from her when he was small" (90). Trapped in this Oedipus-like situation, Luce undergoes a spiritual death, for "paralysis...had seized his spirit" (85). Even the birth and death of his son does not stir Luce to any rebellion against Hattie. But the death of the young hired man, Andy Anderson, forces him to realize that "he, too, like young Andy Anderson, had been a victim of Hattie Murker's fanatical will" (174). And the dynamic function of death is further outlined when Luce comes to know that Hattie married him out of revenge against his friend, Mons Torson, who had jilted Hattie and had therefore thwarted her desire to extend her father's farm to include Mons'. Learning this, Luce feels that Hattie has "just ceased to exist for him--like an intolerable pain, after it has gone" (244).

This metaphorical death of Hattie signals the death of the Oedipal situation within Luce, for he resolves that he will sleep alone rather than leave Hattie, for he is still legally bound to her. But this resolve prepares the way for Hattie's physical death and the death of Luce Dorrit, husband, for Luce's resistance of Hattie's final attempt at persuading him to sleep with her--"she tried to pull his head down upon her shoulder" (246)--drives her out of the house into the fog. She contracts pneumonia which weakens her heart to the point where she has a heart attack at the return of her old lover, Mons Torson. Spiritually and physically free of Hattie, Luce becomes the

boy he was at the beginning of the novel, able to realize his feelings of growth, of "desires and comprehensions and beauties that had never before defined themselves clearly within him" (6), to be, in short, the man he always wanted to be, joining his childhood sweetheart, Karen Strand, who has realized her dream of becoming an artist.

With the figures of Carlotta in The Waters Under the Earth, Norma and Brill in O River, Remember!, and Mark in A Man Had Tall Sons, the theme of the dynamic function of death is further expanded and developed, with an increasing emphasis being placed upon the actual or metaphorical deaths of other figures and their impact upon the life-affirming characters, the vital male and the creative female. In these works, Ostenso comes to see death in terms of psychological stasis, the failure to realize potential, and through the family bond which increases in intensity throughout the novels, she comes to see the achievement of individual potential as the achievement of the total potential of the family. In Wild Geese there is the suggestion that Jude's achievement of identity through various deaths brings about the eventual release of the entire family from the living death which they suffer, a suggestion continued in The Dark Dawn through Luce's connection with his father, for, when Luce achieves freedom from the Oedipal situation, it is as though he has achieved it not only for himself, but for his father, whom he resembles. In the later works, this suggestion becomes a certainty, for each of the central figures, through his development, conquers the stasis which grips the entire family.

This is particularly true in The Waters Under the Earth, for Carlotta, faced with the possibility of succumbing to Jared Gale's

appeal to her maternal instincts, denies him, for in this submission, she sees that she would become like each of her sisters, unable to escape from the bondage to her father's possessive love. These sisters, when faced with the reality of their escape from that bondage, could not escape; rather, each began "running away from life when it came to her", only to be "running home, into oblivion" (315). She decides to marry John Kingswood, a radical journalist-playwright, a friend whom her brother, Tom, met on one of his unsuccessful bids to escape his father's possessiveness.

With Norma and Brill of O River, Remember!, the same pattern is repeated, for, as Brill writes his wife, "you are more than my love, you are all the loves before us through all those years. You and I will vindicate them..." (224). They are reclaiming what the tyrant, Magdali, denied: love. Norma and Brill, like Carlotta and John, become the warped and thwarted lives which have gone before them, but with a difference. They know what the past consisted of, and through the knowledge of the suffering and the deaths which have gone before them, they can not only strengthen their own lives, but in their achievement of freedom and fulfillment, they can vindicate that suffering and death.

And in A Man Had Tall Sons, it is the death of his son, Mark, which enables Luke to achieve his potential as a man, for by dying, Mark has pointed out to Luke what no one living could have taught him, that it is life and love which provides the release from loneliness, fear, and death, that it is not "the destiny of man, born in sin, to struggle upward forever, knowing the struggle would end long before the

goal was reached" (360), for peace is achieved by realizing, as Mark did, that "the end of the long road is the same for all", that the end is there "since the beginning of time" (332), the end of being "given to the earth again" where all life will "grow in beauty" (368). Death is not seen as finality; it is seen as the stage to new growth, a growth which vindicates all previous death because it is born out of that death.

Jude in Wild Geese provides the prototype for the struggle between life, represented by the vital male and the creative female, and annihilation, as represented by the tyrant. As the novels dealing with the tyrant figure progress, this struggle not only involves the integration of the personality of the former, but the justification for the physical or metaphorical deaths of the latter until, in A Man Had Tall Sons, death is seen as the justification of life, and life the justification for death, for both are actually facets of the life-force moving through all things.

The nature of the life-force as outlined in Ostenso's exploration of the themes of love, death, and, indirectly, destiny, through the recurrent figures of the works under consideration is more fully explored and reinforced through her treatment of the images of the land, the dream, and the house. The theme of frustration, explored through the figure of the tyrant, is given added significance in the image of the land as the objective manifestation of the tyrant's devouring nature, for throughout the works considered in this chapter, the land is seen not as "work for the idle, food for the hungry, peace-

ful sleep at night for the worn in heart" (ORR, 34), but as a woman, in the case of the male tyrant, and as economic wealth and the extension of the dreams of the father, in the case of the female tyrant. Ultimately, through the labors of both tyrants, the land's creative potential is perverted into destructive actuality, for by devoting all their energy to the land, and to manipulating it for material gain, the tyrants become dehumanized and dehumanizing.

To Caleb Gare, for example, his fields demand "not only the good in him, but the evil, and the indifference" (171), and he tends them as jealously as if they were a woman. Similarly, Jed Purdy of "The Odd Thousand" pours "his heart's blood, his body's strength, and all the passion that his soul knew" (11-12) into his land until, like Luke Darr, both Jed and Caleb came to see their wives as being "united spiritually, yes, physically, with the ripening beauty of his fields, vibrant as the living earth, voluptuously dreamful as the rounded uplands" (AMHTS, 17). And the fruit of the labors of these latter-day singers of the Song of Solomon is the same: the harvest of the land yields nothing that does not contribute to "confidence in his power" (WG, 320), a "testimony of his success as a farmer, as a tiller of the soil" (WG, 277), as Caleb puts it. The tyrants may be tillers of the soil, manipulators of the land, but they are not human, for the fruits of their human marriages are "twisted and gnarled and stunted as the growth on the bush land he owned, and barren as had been his acres before he had put his own life's blood into them for a meager yield" (WG, 76), as Caleb Gare realized.

This inability to produce anything that is not in some way

stunted or gnarled is the source of frustration for the tyrant, for no matter how much energy he may pour into his land or his family, he will never come to control completely, because the logic of his relationship with the land puts him in a vicious circle of self-destruction. Jude muses that "the fields that Caleb tilled had no tenderness" (67), and it is tenderness, love, a going out of one's nature, which is the only way that the tyrant can change from devouring and being devoured to loving and being loved. Luke's wife says to him, "you can own a house or a farm, but you can't own a wife" (293), because possession is unidirectional, whereas marriage requires sharing, self-effacement. Of all the tyrants, Luke is the only one who finally does see that his relationship with his land, like his relationship with his wife, demands that he return the life given him. Had he not come to this realization, he would, like Caleb, Hattie, Matt, and the other tyrant figures, have been consumed by his dreams of possession and control.

Through the image of the dream, the theme of fulfillment is explored in great detail. An analysis of the dream imagery reveals that not only are the works themselves dreams in their own right, but that there are two types of dreams, the dream that restrains and the dream which releases; both born of an essential loneliness within the dreamer figure. The dream that restrains, dreamed by the tyrant or guilt figures, takes the form of a dream of power or of guilt which is designed to shield these figures from their loneliness, and usually constitutes the dream-world of the novel. The dream that releases, on the other hand, is dreamed by the vital male and the creative female,

as well as by the guilt figure, and takes the form of a desire for another world, another life. In order for this dream of release to be realized, it must not only survive the oppression of the dominant dream, but the dreamer must face the loneliness at the core of his and the larger dream. If this is done, the dreamer figures are free; if it is not, they are destroyed either physically or psychologically.

Each of the works under consideration in this chapter is a dream-world which is created by the focal character. The world of Wild Geese, for example, is created by Caleb Gare, who reminds Lind Archer of a "painting she had once seen of the fixed, sardonic face of a fakir, lifting his eyes upward to catch the demoniacal image of his conjuring" (8). Caleb is a magician, creating "the toil of the day [which] hung about them [his family] ...like a tedious dream" (18), "the leaden spell that seemed to hang over them all" (85). Similarly, The Dark Dawn is a dream world, beginning with "the real story of Lucian Dorrit...[which] has to do...with the two weeks in the autumn of his twenty-first year" (3), two weeks in which, "scarcely conscious of his own being", Luce is "drugged, spirited away on the mellifluent air of that Indian Summer to a place in which, it seemed, he had wandered long ago" (5), two weeks which extend through the "passion and tragedy and beauty of his mature life" (3), and end with Luce becoming "the boy that Muller had known back beyond a shadowy yesterday" (294). The Young May Moon, like The Dark Dawn, takes place within the mind of a single character, Marcia Vorse. The novel opens with Marcia retracing her life from her marriage to her birth in Bethune, a re-tracing which she sees as a "nightmare" in which she hears "hollow

voices out of the past" (1), and in which she is surrounded by "presences...of her own lonely childhood...become legend now with the legends of the past" (3). The novel ends with a similar retracing of the "night-terrors of childhood" (20), from which she wakes with "the feeling that she had slept a long time" (299), for to her, "time was not something that had passed. All eternity was but a single fierce stroke of rapture. Existence was all a weaving to and fro upon the same dim loom" (298). Over the world of The Waters Unders the Earth there is this same sense of timelessness, a "waiting hush that seemed to have been poised and listening over this place ever since she [Carlotta] could remember" (268), a world created out of Matt Welland's "dreamlike, rhapsodic ineffectuality" (118), the "vaporious optimism of a man who had lived always in the upper air of sterile illusion" (130).

Ivar Wing creates the world of O River, Remember!, as he reminisces about his life, the "hurt memories of forgotten years" which the wind off the river evokes in the minds of his granddaughter and grandson, a wind beneath whose touch "in other days, young courage had faltered and young faith had clutched at its dreams with a sigh..." (29); and with these words, Ivar's life unfolds. Similarly, the stories in Milk Route are presented through the consciousness of Ben and Inga Start, Ben who is always "half dreaming of something" (15), and Inga, who is "lost in a dream that could be shaped to no words" (14). The Sunset Tree traces the "phantasy that had its beginnings... in a stone quarry or the haunted ravine...in Sun Rock", the fantasy which is the life of Esther Clarke. And A Man Had Tall Sons discusses the "springing into life of something that had lain, restless and

impatient, for years within the inviolable crypt" of the "secret ego" (11) of Luke Darr, the dream of rebirth, a new beginning, a return to his youthful days.

Each of the novels, then, is in essence a dream world, a timeless world suspended between past and future, life and death, created by the various central figures for the same reason that Caleb Gare creates his world, "so that they might not see the loneliness of each other" (36). But this spiritual loneliness cannot be suppressed for long, for it too creates a dream world of its own which is set in direct opposition to the larger dream. In Wild Geese, for example, Lind Archer is the central dreamer figure who is directly opposed to Caleb. She is "lonely, and even more conscious of the stark loneliness of Amelia, of Judith, of Ellen and Martin, each within himself" (36). It is because of her consciousness of loneliness that Lind can awaken the sense of loneliness in others, a sense which ultimately destroys Caleb, for it is because "Lind had come to her and...had sprung a secret lock in Jude's being" (67) that Jude is able to rebel against Caleb's tyranny, to realize her dream of another life.

Caleb's attempt to punish Amelia for her part in Jude's elopement ends with his feeling that "something crumbled within him, like an old wall, leaving bare his spirit" (345). Face to face with the loneliness he has attempted to conceal by his tyranny, Caleb's "sanity came back to him, the cold clear sanity that had been gone from him during the years of his hatred.... Shame and self-loathing broke upon him overpoweringly. He lunged aside and made for the door, feeling his way as if he had suddenly gone blind--blind with sight" (345-46).

Unable to face what he has made of himself and of his family, Caleb is destroyed and "the mystery...at the Gares...seemed to vanish with Caleb" (355), leaving Jude, Lind, Mark, and the rest of the Gares free.

The Dark Dawn traces the struggle between the dream of fulfillment and the dream of restraint in great detail through the dreams of Luce Dorrit. The one is the expression of his feeling that "beyond the inhospitable confines of the little world in which he had always lived lay yet another world, a greater world, where the precious thing that was within him would take its destined form" (17). The other is the expression of the barrier that lies between the dream of fulfillment and its realization, a barrier that is fundamental in the life of the male: the dependency involved in the Oedipal relationship, the inability to act for oneself.

Luce marries a woman who resembles his mother in several salient respects: her hands are "not unlike his mother's" (49); her "smouldering economy of feeling" (54) is parallel to his mother's doing everything with "a fierce, vigorous economy" (32); her "fanatical will" (174) with which she victimizes him has its counterpart in his mother's "fierce will" that "filled Lucian's waking hours with reasonless complaining" so full that "even when he sought escape, as his father had done...the withering atmosphere was about him" (52). But the most important resemblance between Hattie and Luce's mother is the way in which Hattie mothers him. She tells him to put on a jacket so he will not catch cold; she reminds him not to stay out late; and when she wants something, she attempts to "pull his head down upon her shoulder" (246). Luce himself admits that "'I'm a coward...I'm as afraid of

Hattie as I ever was of my own mother. It's something that I can't break in myself" (155).

Because of his inability to sever this Oedipal relationship, Luce is trapped in a "grotesque unreality", a "fantastic dream that moved about him. He looked at Hattie and saw her going about her daily tasks in a world that had all the outward appearances of reality but none of the inner substance of it" (84), until the death of the hired man, in whom Luce sees the same youthful ambitions he once had, forces Luce to admit that "he, too, like young Andy Anderson, had been a victim of Hattie Murker's fanatical will" (174). This death reinforces Luce's feeling of loneliness when Hattie denies him the friendship of Karen Strand, "his last little contact with something sweet, something young, something that belonged infinitely to his own youth" (158).

Under the impact of these events, Luce's "mind...turned inward upon itself with terrible clarity. He saw himself now, as though it were someone else, on that night of white moonlight, white snow, an ignorant boy suddenly aflame with romance and high ecstasy" (174), and with this memory of the night he succumbed to Hattie, "he no longer thought of himself as that boy who had done a wrong and had offered his life to atone for it. He was a man now" (175). And to escape the "utter hell of his soul" (191), to combat the loneliness he feels, Luce resists Hattie's influence, admitting that "I did it. I brought all this on myself...I've got to go on living--through it--to the end" (277). Seeing his responsibility for creating his "utter hell", Luce is able to scrape "the almost obliterated name, 'H. Murker' off the

[cream cans]" and "to paint on each, in bold, red letters, 'L. Dorrit'", feeling that "there was something abnormally symbolical in what he was doing" (280). He is also able to strike Mons Torson, the friend who betrayed him, and to continue his interrupted journey to the world he dreamed of in his boyhood.

Through the figure of Marcia Vorse in The Young May Moon, Ostenso traces yet another aspect of the conflict between the dream of restraint and the dream of fulfillment. The world in which Marcia lives after the death of her husband leaves her alone, as she was before she married him, is a "mist...within which she lived with the terrors and beauties that were secret to her own soul" (65), a "strange enchantment" made all the more strange by her "ever-returning sense that Rolf was beside her, closer than he had ever been in life" (48). From this initial state of longing for what can never be again, Marcia passes from the "night-mare" of this "endless coming back again to the house" (52) of her dead husband and her mother-in-law to a state of "loneliness such as she had never known...a degrading, shameful loneliness that exposed her to unguessable humiliations" (143) in an old stone house she has renovated. Although she does not understand precisely why she must go through this state, she realizes that "'I've got to live out something--something in myself.... Up here--isolated in this way--I can live it out'" (149). What she does is to live out, as Doctor Paul Brule describes it, "this belief that all life hangs on this something you call atonement--nothing but an illusion--a companion in your own peculiar aloneness...a device by which you shield yourself from the unbearable truth.... That you have done something irrevocable"

(244), a way "'we have of getting away from our loneliness'" (245).

Marcia, trapped in this illusory world, this nightmare of restraint, tries to "tell herself that she would never be lonely again, [that] she would be enchanted forever--aloof from existence as she had known it once, had dreamed of it once. And then...that poignant thrust of life--that sharp, quick flame! She had survived loneliness, but only as a swimmer, reaching an unpeopled shore, survives death in the sea" (247). Life claims Marcia through Brule's love. In her attempt to maintain her isolation by running away from him, a repetition of her initial attempt to run away from her husband, Marcia returns to the place where she met her husband and discovers that the spot evokes no memories. Through her defeat of the "inertia of her overwhelming loss" (298) in her attempt to escape, she achieves "greater fullness, deeper release, more patient understanding of what life asked of one" (298).

In Wild Geese, The Dark Dawn, and The Young May Moon, Ostenso provides a detailed portrayal of the nature, the mechanism, and the outcome of the conflict between the dream of restraint and the dream of release, emphasizing the necessity of the dreamer figure to face and overcome the essential loneliness at the core of his dream. In The Waters Under the Earth, O River, Remember!, and Milk Route, she shifts her attention to those individuals who are unable to face this loneliness and are submerged in the dream of restraint. In The Waters Under the Earth and O River, Remember!, the dream of restraint which the tyrant figure has is born of a fear caused by the suppression of an essential loneliness.

Matt, in The Waters Under the Earth, has a basic fear of life

and love, born of the suppression of the loneliness he felt when he alienated himself from his brother. Magdali, in O River, Remember!, has a basic fear of the wanderlust implicit in the artistic impulse, a fear born of the suppression of the loneliness she felt when her brother left for Paris to become an artist. The fears of both Matt and Magdali are in turn concealed in their dream worlds. Matt's dream world is the "sterile illusion" of his "mystic absorptions", "his stuffy avowals of faith and humility and a thankful heart" (51) which find their expression in a "devout sense of obligation to the morals of the young" (33). Magdali's dream world is her hope of "building a little empire" (210) in which "what Magdali hated and feared, she simply convinced herself did not exist" (337).

But the irony which characterizes the lives of Matt and Magdali is that they drive their children to the very source of their own fears, and at that source, their children are torn apart, like Tom in The Waters Under the Earth, who "'goes out into the world to get strength to fight the family, and comes home to get strength to fight the world'" (268), condemned to relieve repeatedly the conflict between his dream of fulfillment and Matt's dream of restraint. Karsten, of O River, Remember!, is also torn apart by "this feeling of divided loyalty" (277) because his mother, "with a gentleness and understanding that left him helpless to oppose her...had shown him where lay the path of duty and had sent him forth resolved to follow it to the end" (359), disregarding his ambition to be an artist and leading to his destruction.

Other children, like Jenny and Olina, succumb to the dream of

restraint at the point of fulfillment out of a fear that they will, through their ingratitude, kill the dominant parent. Jenny, about to elope, becomes convinced that "she had been about to do a thing of unbelievably gross selfishness. A thing that might have killed her father" (TWUTE,144). She turns back, feeling that "father would never have forgiven me, never" (145), and returns to her father, who begins "building a wall of mystical preciousness about her, enclosing her from the rest of the family"(153). Similarly, Olina does not elope with Dave Shaleen, a young sculptor, because she feels that "it would kill mama!" (ORR,353). In her flight, she thinks, "it was somebody else, not herself, who was running.... It was somebody else" (354), her true self destroyed in the conflict between her mother and her lover.

Each of the children of Matt and of Magdali are in turn driven to the core of their parent's fear, repeat the parent's choice, and become either trapped in the nightmare of his loneliness or are torn apart by the frustration caused by the choice. The only escape possible is to live through the dream of restraint, like Carlotta of The Waters Under the Earth and Solveig of O River, Remember!, and make the choice their parent had failed to make.

In Milk Route, Ostenso focusses her attention on the individual who is trapped in a dream devised by his society, a nightmare of sordid reality in the form of physically and spiritually maimed people, products of World War II. In this nightmare, the necessity for the creation of a dream of fulfillment is of paramount importance, and each of the major figures is a study of the process by which such dreams are made. One of the methods is through love, as is demonstrated by Ben and Inga

Start, whose surname is indicative of the importance of love for the individual. Adelberta Wilson, whose physical beauty is marred by her large nose, is caught in the nightmare of the thought that "one day, she would be forty, without warmth, without fulness, without love" (60), and escapes this nightmare by affirming her love for Pete Bellingham, a love not "newly discovered" but "that had been awaiting their coming for a long, long time" (173). Pete too is caught up in the "recurrent nightmare" of seeing "his right arm hurtling away from him, the grenade still clutched in its fingers" (169), an arm which still "itched to throw a hand grenade" (170). His nightmare passes when he completes the desire to throw the grenade by hitting the town troublemaker. Bill Clifford wakens from his dream of nihilism by realizing that the "profound dislocation" which he feels cannot be conquered by flight, for "You were always back again where you started from, long before you'd had time to find what you sought" (245), and he returns to his home town to start a newspaper. Common to all these realizations of dreams of fulfillment is the fact that they must be acted upon in order to remain viable, as Ben Start says to a young boy who dreams of becoming a scientist, "hang on to those ideas.... No matter what they are, they're the only thing that's worth a damn to you" (250).

In The Sunset Tree and A Man Had Tall Sons, Ostenso combines the dream of restraint and the dream of fulfillment in the central figure of each of the works, and by doing so, she emphasizes the fact that ultimately, it is the individual alone who creates his own nightmare and who is alone capable of escaping it and achieving fulfillment. Esther, in The Sunset Tree, like Marcia in The Young May Moon, is

trapped in a dream of what can never be again. Longing for the love she knew with Danny O'Rourke in Sun Rock, Esther creates a series of dream worlds to protect herself from the reality of her loneliness, each dream world more restraining than the last. From the "nightmare" which her home town becomes after she loses Danny, Esther passes into the "fable of her happiness" (77) as a young girl in the city, a fable created to hide the "structure of ugly fact that was already building" (53). This fable culminates in the "hypnotic dream" of her complicity in an attempted murder, a dream which forces her further into herself, cultivating "a manner of cool indifference behind which she managed to conceal her own feelings" (129). This dream world is shattered by the death of a young lover, Nevin, whereupon she moves "in a somnambulistic way", a "wandering...soul in search of its lost mate" (147). Her somnambulism broken by a visit to the "Hither Hills" in which "there was an echo of the hills of Sun Rock, long ago" (182), Esther feels as though she "was wonderfully someone else, or more rightly no one at all, made substanceless, released for the first time since she was sixteen from the darkly corridorred house that was herself" (180), having the "wildly sweet experience of being born into nothing" (181).

In this entranced state, she meets Sam Bridewell, who becomes, to her, "Danny O'Rourke...for Sam Bridewell was Danny O'Rourke. Sam Bridewell was love and all the promise of love" (190-191). But face to face with the realization of her dream of fulfillment, Esther's suppressed past confronts her, and in confessing "I'm the one men fell in love with. I'm the one who broke their poor, innocent hearts. And I'm the one who killed Beatrice...and her unborn child" (199), she

breaks down, succumbing to the desire for escape from her past which has governed her life from the beginning. She runs out into a storm, suffers a long illness, recovers and assumes a new name in an effort to begin again.

But she cannot begin again, for "fear had made inroads upon the insouciant aura that had protected Esther Clarke's being--and that had not been restored by the name of Ronda Cameron. The fear of being alone, the fear that comes from being no longer very young" (210). Out of this fear, she marries and bears a child whom she protects out of her fear of loneliness. And it is this child who ultimately forces Esther to go back to the cause of her loneliness and to the resultant restraining dream, for the child wishes to marry Jim Bridewell, the son of the man who was the reincarnation of Esther's original dream of love and fulfillment. Esther returns to the spot where she first met Danny, drops her assumed name, and realizes that her daughter, like herself, must have the chance to realize her own dream of fulfillment.

Rather than creating a series of dreams of restraint in which he eventually becomes trapped, Luke Darr of A Man Had Tall Sons pursues his dream of fulfillment which becomes a dream of restraint. Luke had suppressed his youthful dream of becoming a minister in order that he might become materially successful through a convenient marriage; but in doing so, he sacrificed the development of his personality. His wife's death and his subsequent remarriage present Luke with the opportunity to begin again, to have "children of his own", "his land", a "golden-haired daughter who would climb to his knees and circle his neck with soft, loving arms" (14), and to fulfill the transformation

of his youthful ambition, a transformation which "came upon Luke like the breaking of a great light. And I will build a tabernacle" (86).

But Luke's dreams of fulfillment are dogged by the memory of his dead wife; "everywhere he turned...he was confronted by something that reminded him of Agatha.... Agatha's shadow" (45), the shadow of the lack of "the courage to follow his convictions and dedicate himself to the task of saving men's souls, even though he had gone hungry because of it" (92).

One by one Luke's dreams of fulfillment crumble because of his inability to recognize that "he lived in a world of sheer fantasy in which reality and its stern demands had no place. It was a world above and beyond him"; nevertheless, "he found himself reaching toward it, all but grasping the unattainable" (215). Lacking the necessary power to make his visions realities, Luke is unable to father a child, to prevent his sons from asking for their share of the land, and to create the "shining new tabernacle of [his] dreams" (127).

Faced with the rapid dissipation of his dreams, Luke muses, "some part of a man remains forever a child, who runs to his mother's arms to smother his fears. Even the reassuring strength of Agatha would have helped. But he had been alone" (220). And in his growing aloneness, his growing isolation from his family, and his increasingly unattainable dreams, Luke deludes himself into believing that "strength without anger...he was achieving it at last" (355). The news of his son's death shatters Luke's delusions, and in his feeling that "'a part of me has died'" (356), Luke comes to the point where he faces his lack of courage, faces the truth of himself: "His thinking, begun so simply,

had somehow led him out upon treacherous ground where he had been trapped unwittingly" (366). He ignores the "warning to return to the familiar precepts that had guided him down through the years" (366), and refuses to regress to his illusory dreams of fulfillment, which are actually dreams of restraint, for "there was no turning back, he knew. Doubts were relentless--stubborn barriers against any return. They persisted until they became a new faith, replacing the old" (367). And he does create a new faith, a new dream of fulfillment, not restraint, by planting the dahlia root, symbol of his dead wife and lack of courage, to "grow in beauty" (368).

Through the dream imagery of the works considered here, Ostenso explores in detail the themes of frustration and fulfillment. These themes are linked with the theme of death not only through the psychological implications of the dream imagery, but also through the imagery of houses implicit in this imagery, as in the phrase, "building castles in the air". Like the dream imagery, the imagery of houses in the novels is concerned with the problem of the integration of personality. There are two types of houses in these novels: prisons, places where individuals are prevented from developing; and refuges, places where people go to rebuild themselves. The former type of house embodies the theme of the static function of death, while the latter embodies the dynamic function of death since, in both cases, the house is a place of seclusion. The progression in the novels is concerned with the transition on the part of various figures from the house as prison to the house as refuge.

In Wild Geese, The Dark Dawn, The Young May Moon, and The Waters Under the Earth, the house as prison and the house as refuge have an objective reality, and the movement on the part of the central life-affirming figures consists of an escape from one house to the other. For example, the Gare farm in Wild Geese is described as being a prison, and as the novel develops, this prison becomes increasingly smaller as Caleb's tyranny grows, until, for Jude, bound on the barn floor, "everything [was] closing in...only the land, and the cattle, and the manure" (242), her world revolving about the symbol of Caleb's control over her, "that part of the barn where the ax was" (272), the ax with which she attempted to murder him and which is now behind a locked door that Caleb "went past...every hour or so to see that it was secure" (272). But her escape from this prison, foreshadowed in her visit to the refuge of the Klovacz house and to the refuge of the arbor of the forest pool where she meets Sven, is effected by the crumbling of the wall of tyranny within Caleb, the crumbling wood in which the ax was embedded and from which the ax falls.

Luce Dorrit leaves the house of his youth, a "lean...affair... a melancholy person" for the "aloof and solitary" Murker house whose atmosphere is one of "complete serenity, order" (63). It is apparently a refuge, but in fact it is a temporary tomb, for despite the fact that human beings live in it, it has a "vacant, unlived-in air about it" (63). The Murker house becomes a permanent tomb when Hattie builds a new house of stone, an "animate...great, gray, feelingless creature that would one day reach out and draw [Luce] irresistibly into its granite bosom" (184). This house, an image of Hattie, is not only

Luce's tomb and a monument to Hattie's power, but a mausoleum built to commemorate Hattie's victory over life and the death of her love for Mons Torson.

As a "fitting complement" to the stone house, Luce builds a stone wall, emblematic of the wall "he was literally building...about himself, about his life" (139). Imprisoned within the walls of Hattie's house and the walls of his own making, Luce seeks refuge in his dreams of Karen Strand, dreams which "had become all at once an inviolable sanctuary" (210), after the refuge he sought in building dreams for his son was destroyed by his son's death. But even this refuge is denied Luce, so he turns to the house of Nan Miracle, the local seamstress, for an escape from "the curse of having been born among such people" (236).

Learning of Hattie's affair with Mons, he finds an alternate escape in a room "up there under the rafters where the wind sighed and screamed as it had done when he was a boy, in his father's house, a lifetime ago" (245). And it is this refuge which sets Luce free, for by insisting upon returning to this house of his youth, sleeping apart from Hattie, Luce causes Hattie to break down and finally, to die on a bed that "looked curiously rigid as though it were, under the covers, a slab of stone" (289). Luce is thus released to make real the "inviolable sanctuary" of his dreams of Karen.

Marcia Vorse, in The Young May Moon, like Luce, undergoes a period of imprisonment in the house of her mother-in-law, Dorcas, a house which is guarded by a gate that "made anyone a trespasser" and which is enveloped in a Virginia creeper that "hung...like a mask over

a white face, the black eyes of the upper windows staring out from above" (16), enclosing its stark emptiness. Dorcas' house is a grave, a place where "only Death lurked" (57), shutting out "all of April... young and wild and strange" (73).

Marcia leaves this house for the refuge of a run-down stone house which is, like her life, "a staring ruin against the sun" (119). In rebuilding this house Marcia rebuilds herself and comes to the realization, "how solitary a human being was, even at best, locked in this curious tenement of flesh and blood" (186). Realizing this, Marcia comes to see that the refuge which she has rebuilt can become a prison more deadly than the one she left, and out of "fear at this stoniness that possessed her" (281), a fear which "sighed languidly, sinisterly, through the room as though the old house were its lungs... [and which] used her own heart for the rhythm of its power" (206), Marcia escapes the refuge that had become her prison.

The Young May Moon represents the fullest treatment of the house as prison and the house as refuge as objective realities; The Waters Under the Earth is the transition from this treatment to the concept of these houses as subjective realities. The Welland house is, like the houses of all the tyrants, a prison, but it assumes a deeper significance when it is considered in its genealogical sense. The entire family is "idiotic with submission" to Matt, and the house becomes a "damned zoo! From cage to cage the jungle bedlam rose, a diabolic contagion, ripping along the senses. Matt Welland--the keeper" (47). Not only is the home a madhouse, a pest-house, a menagerie, but it is also a "fastness of moral and physical security" (77)

in which the children's "Welland consciousness" is in "feudal subjugation to Matt" (48). The children are infected by the contagion of the "sense of sin that had grown to dark bloom and darker fruit under this roof", a sense which is expressed in a "feeling of dread...the feeling that they were being followed by something--something relentless out of the Welland house" (144).

The objective reality of the house becomes a subjective reality within the minds of the children who cannot escape it. They become "the Wellands who had been crushed and sealed up in a vessel of bigotry and fear, to be left alone in their poverty and obscurity, their divinely ordained doom" (186). To these children, the house, populated by the ghosts of themselves and their unfulfilled dreams, is a "house of capering death" (244). The only child to escape the contagion and imprisonment is Carlotta, by virtue of her ability to "live her life out in her own way" (47). This ability stems from "something lawless within herself" (87) which is part of the fact that she "had no knowledge of herself; only her body had knowledge of her, and the rhythm of living flowed through her like a song" (133). This rhythm is not drawn from the house, but from "her favorite haunt... where the great oaks grew" (160) and from the garden, where Carla thinks, "life was there, at her hand, or under her foot, creating and re-creating again, storming up.... This was the assurance she had come to know in a world of change and contradiction" (259). In the garden, she feels, "part of my life is walking here" (92). Rather than to live in the house of the Wellands, Carla chooses to live in the house of nature, completely in harmony with the house of her own body and being.

The image of the house of nature is expanded in O River, Remember!, taking the form of a soddy, built with "the humblest stuff of the earth...a temple to earth itself, the temple of home" (143), a refuge in direct opposition to the brick house which Magdali builds and expands into the town of Wing, a "monument" to Magdali's tyranny. Each child becomes part of this monument but each, like Karsten, incorporates the soddy into his mind, carrying throughout his life a longing "for the unpretentious soddy...he had known when he was a boy" (245). Although only one child, Solveig, manages to escape the artificial stone house of Magdali's building, it is fitting that her husband, Ivar, shuns the huge brick house and passes on his unpretentious home to his grandchildren who find in it a refuge from the terrors of World War II.

It is this dream of home that informs Milk Route, for each of the characters attempts to build a home of his dreams and escape the cage in which he lives. Each of these cages is, in fact, a prison of the mind, which finds its direct expression in the physical home of the individual. George Panker, for example, in "the reassuring haven of his own home" wishes to "lock the door on the somber past forever" (18), shutting himself away from the reality of his factory, and his wife away from the reality of her criminal past. But isolating himself and his wife in this way is tantamount to attempting to become static in the flux of life. George fails at this task, for his factory problems enter the cage of his home and once inside, they render him incapable of solving his problems and, ultimately, they destroy his wife.

A parallel to the stasis in which George attempts to hide is the stasis in which Colin Trale, the minister, finds himself. Unable to solve the problems of the community, Colin paces, "like a caged hyena" (29), but instead of trying to lock the door of his mind and his house upon his problems, Colin goes out into the community, believing "religion isn't beauty. It isn't poetry.... Religion is passionate, reckless, destructive, idol-smashing" (35), and although he smashes few idols, he does become a "good man going daily among his people" (249).

Similarly, Bill Clifford, a war veteran, looking at the burned-out ruin of a house in which a young violinist died sees in "those broken walls...the grotesque monument...[to a] world without design" (225), and in his nihilism and disillusionment, he senses that "living had come to a full stop, just as surely as if he had died" (227). But in this static state, he does realize that the "dislocation" he feels is within himself, and that he must repair the fracture himself. Like Colin Trale, Bill acts and thus escapes the cage of his own mind.

In The Sunset Tree and A Man Had Tall Sons the process by which the cage of the mind is escaped and the burned-out shell is repaired is delineated. Esther Clarke lives in an apartment whose "tyrannic walls" (42) and furniture, colored to match the coloring of the town of her youth, overshadow the life within. By reminiscing with a childhood friend, Esther retraces the steps which led her from Sun Rock to her present home, and in the retracing, she emerges from "the darkly coridored house that was herself" (180). Similarly, Luke Darr in A Man Had Tall Sons, after remarrying, refashions the house of his former

marriage to obliterate the past, just as Esther began her new life by "laying a pleasant fiction strong enough to bear the structure of ugly fact that was already building" (53) after she left home. But in re-fashioning his house, Luke drives his son Mark out of the refurbished house to the soddy where Mark's mother was born, a house which Mark rebuilds to contain both himself and his mother's memory. As Mark's "perfect little dream-house" (99) becomes stronger, Luke's home becomes a "house divided against itself", and as the "crumbling structure" of his second marriage collapses, Luke's "sense of inadequacy" (234) increases. He compensates for this sense by building an increasingly glorious new community church in his mind. But this house of God crumbles with the burning of the old church and Luke himself is destroyed, both catastrophes resulting from Mark's suicide. A new Luke emerges with the newly-planted dahlia root, for in his recognition of the cause of his inadequacy, Luke not only builds a new faith but a new marriage with his second wife, as well as enabling his remaining sons to build their own lives.

Building a new life is the ultimate significance of the house imagery in the works discussed in this chapter, for through the creation of a prison and the resulting stasis, the individual is faced with a living death; seeking refuge from this living death, he must face and overcome the cause of his interment, for otherwise he will remain a prisoner of himself and his fears.

Through the dominant recurring figures of the tyrant, the guilt figure, the subjugated individuals, and the vital male and the

creative female, as well as through the images of the land, the house, and the dream, Ostenso explores the themes of love and death, two facets of the life-force which she sees operating through all things. The most significant facet of this force is destiny, a theme which Ostenso explores through the sub-themes of repetition and choice, evidenced in the structural patterns of the works considered in this chapter, and which have already been touched on in our consideration of the various recurrent figures and images. The theme of repetition is explored through the various parallel figures, repeated events, and the cyclical structure of individual works, while the theme of choice, an extension of the concept of duality which informs the entire framework of Ostenso's vision, is investigated through the various situations in which the central figures find themselves.

Wild Geese furnishes the basic elements in the theme of destiny through the presentation of various parallel characters. Jude and Lind form the core parallel relationship, the one fecund, vital, earthy; the other beautiful, sensitive, and artistically inclined. Taken together, they represent what is later to become the figure of the creative female. Sven and Mark present the male counterparts of these female figures, the one virile, constructive, and down-to-earth; the other handsome, creative, and educated. Taken together, Sven and Mark represent what will later become the vital male figure. Both pairs are also dreamers, and are in direct contrast to the Caleb-Thorvaldson pair, who represent the negative aspects of human nature: sterility, criminality, and tyranny. They are counterbalanced by the Fusi Aronson-Bjarnasson pair, representatives of fertility, justice, and mercy. A

third parallel exists in the progression from Lind to Jude to Amelia, and from Mark to Sven to Caleb, each stage in the progression indicating a return to a more elemental, less complex, state of existence and mind.

These various parallel figures not only enhance the significance of the theme of repetition, but they also underline the problem of the integration of personality. Furthermore, these character pairings and parallels necessitate a parallel plot structure, which entails the repetition of events, the second major structural pattern of the works under consideration. The most significant of these repeated events are those involving Caleb and those involving Jude. Caleb's criminality is underlined by the fact that he killed Fusi's brothers by refusing them shelter in a blizzard out of fear that they had contracted a contagious disease. And Caleb's tyranny is underlined by the fact that he would willingly violate the sanctity of the lake where the bodies of Bjarnasson's brother and son-in-law-to-be lie undiscovered, in order that he may have fish which he feels is less expensive than meat and thus beneficial to his economy, and also in order that he may demonstrate his "legal" rights.

Jude's repetition of her mother's crime--illegitimate pregnancy--is tied to the concept of choice, the second major sub-theme of the theme of destiny. Jude, in effect, relives her mother's life, and justifies that life not only because she has followed her "true instincts", one of the hallmarks of the creative female, but also because the stigma of illegitimacy will not be passed on to her unborn child since she will marry her lover who will live. Jude thus

ensures that Caleb's tyranny will not be repeated, for Sven will not have the same frustration as Caleb. Furthermore, Jude's repetition of her mother's youthful life forces Amelia to defy Caleb, resulting in Caleb's death. Lind thinks to herself, "somehow things balanced themselves under the most appalling conditions" (308), which is the rationale of the parallel structure and the theme of choice, for the life-force not only proceeds by the balance of opposites, but it depends on this balance for its energy. An imbalance, as seen in Caleb's tyranny and Ellen's suffering, is self-destructive, for it ultimately brings its own redress. Neither the tyranny nor the suffering have any productive purpose.

The repetition of characters and events and the repetition of the crime at the core of the tyrant and guilt figures' existence--the presentation of a second choice--are the major elements in the structural patterns of each work in this chapter. From the initial presentation of the themes of repetition and choice in Wild Geese, there is a development in the treatment of these themes from novel to novel, culminating in A Man Had Tall Sons. In The Dark Dawn, for example, the repetition of events is the central structural feature, and its rationale is given by Doctor Muller, who says, "'somewhere in the cursed scheme of things, something--or somebody--side-stepped, shirked, fell down, and the burden of honor rests upon Luce Dorrit's shoulders. It happens all the time...in Loyola--in London--in Hindustan. One of two things happens to the victim. Either he fights back and emerges in control of himself and of the world about him--or he goes under'" (101). Later on, Muller points out to Luce, "'a man's got to slough off his

vanity--his surplus pride--self-delusion--his pet fears--before he'll ever do anything worth talking about in the world"(213). By repeating the errors which have led up to his present enslavement, Luce learns to be a man, making the incorrect choices to make the correct ones.

This theory is further developed in The Young May Moon where, through the cyclical structure of the novel, Ostenso investigates the concept of the simultaneity of time implicit in Muller's statement above. Through the parallel lives of Paul Brule and Marcia Vorse, for whom the most significant repeated event is their return, psychologically, to their absent spouses, the simultaneity of time is explored. Marcia thinks, "time was threading its bright beads along the silk cord of eternity. Somewhere, absently, it would make a knot" (215) in the form of an overpowering emotion which must be surmounted in order for her to live. By tracing the thread back to the knot and untangling it, Marcia escapes from the self-destructive cycle of a recurrent obsession and existence becomes "all a weaving to and fro upon the same dim loom" (298). Marcia goes back in order to go ahead, for "time was not something that had passed" (298).

In The Waters Under the Earth the concept of choice is further delineated through the repeated events in the parallel lives of the Welland children, which illustrates the concept of the simultaneity of time still further. On the broadest level, the novel is cyclical, beginning and ending in the summer, with Matt holding forth about his children and Carlotta going her own way. It is made up of eight chapters, beginning and ending with "Carlotta", each intervening chapter discussing each of the Welland children. Each child lives a life

parallel to that of the others, with the exception of Carlotta. They are given the opportunity to escape the tyranny of Matt through a sexual partner, except Tom, whose love-object becomes a life beyond the family confines. This escape is cut off through Matt's intervention, but each child is given a second chance to choose, and each declines the choice in favor of the family. This second refusal results in the imprisonment of the child in his unrealized dreams, his unrealized self, an imprisonment accompanied by a physical or psychological disease.

Through the devices of a cyclical structure, parallel lives, and the repetition of the opportunity of choice, the concept of the simultaneity of time is reinforced for, in effect, although linear time has elapsed, there has been no forward motion on the part of any child except Carla. But even her development from infancy to adulthood is not progress in the sense of forward development for, as is evidenced by the fact that Carlotta at the beginning and at the end of the novel is still Carla, doing as she wishes, her adulthood was present in her infancy, her end in her beginning. Therefore, time has not really passed for Carla, for although she has mentally and physically matured, and has also had the choice of physical release from the family, she rejects the merely physical as an escape and affirms her individuality with this rejection, and thereby remains in the timelessness of individuality, in time but not of it.

As is evidenced in The Waters Under the Earth, Ostenso has a growing sense of structure which expresses her growing thematic concern with time and destiny. In O River, Remember!, this concern is further

explored through structural patterns. There are numerous parallel figures in the novel, summed up in Norma and Brill, who are all the pairs of Shaleen and Wing lovers and who will therefore vindicate each pair through their successful love and marriage. Furthermore, the work begins in the present with the meeting of Norma and Brill, and moves to the past with the meeting of Ivar Wing and Kate Shaleen. To emphasize the timelessness of the novel, both Ivar and Brill have wives, the former who is coming from a far land, and the latter who has left for a far land. Both Ivar and Brill are therefore not legally free to become involved in a love affair with a Shaleen woman. But Ivar's wife stays for good, while Brill's wife leaves for good, and both for the same reason: money. Brill is therefore able to divorce his wife while Ivar is not, and he can thus marry Norma Shaleen and live out Ivar's potential relationship with Kate.

This mirror-image structure emphasizes the timeless nature of the lives portrayed in the novel, a structure made more obvious by the fact that the book is divided into three sections: a prologue, "Spring, 1941"; Book One, divided into two parts, the first, dealing with events in 1870, and the second, dealing with Spring, 1941; and Book Two, also in two parts, the first dealing with events from 1888 to 1902, and the second, by way of an epilogue, dealing with December, 1941. The prologue, providing the contemporary sphere of action and made timeless by the pervasive dream imagery surrounding the meeting of Norma and Brill, shifts imperceptibly into Book One. The imperceptible shift and the fact that contemporary and historical action are juxtaposed within each book further emphasizes the timelessness of this quasi-Montague-

Capulet story, which finds its ultimate expression in the words of old Ivar Wing: "'generations, once begun, go on and on forever'" (393).

The concept of the cyclical nature of time informs Milk Route, expressed through the repetition of events which is reflected in the intricate structure of the novel. The basic image which runs through the work is that of the house: there are seven central houses in the novel, which in itself tells the story of an eighth house, that of Ben Start. Chapters I and II deal with each of these houses in turn: Chapter I deals with them generally, as is evident in the sub-section headings--"Sunrise", "Back-doors", and "Houses"--while Chapter II deals with them specifically, each sub-section titled after an address. Chapter VIII returns to these houses under the sub-title, "Street Numbers". The intervening chapters deal with the lives of the people in these houses, as well as with the life of Ben Start as he goes about his milk route, each chapter composed of several sub-sections whose sub-titles are organized on a principle of duality and progression. Chapter III is composed of three sections, "Woman-talk", "Man-talk", and "Child-talk"; Chapter IV of "A Prelude", "Intermezzo", and "A Dance for Witches"; Chapter V of "Clear Sky", "horizon Cloud", "Storm", "Refuge", and "Calm"; and Chapter VI of "Spring Twilight", "Spring Tumult", "Spring Darkness", and "A Pinch of Snuff" and "A Cup of Tea". Chapter VII returns to the initial image of the house with "Broken Walls", and "Cardinal Bird" which is a pun on the word "cardinal", emphasizing the fact that the mental cages of the people of the town have been destroyed. Chapter VIII returns to the houses with which the novel began, underlining the fact that, as each chapter's sub-titles indicate,

the novel is cyclical in structure, made up of a series of progressions and antitheses in its parallel events. Further unifying the work are the two central upheavals which bring about the destruction of the cages: the explosion of the factory, which unites the townsfolk; and the blizzard, which unites several pairs of lovers. Underlying the novel is the figure of Ben Start, with whom the novel opens as he goes about his milk route, and with whom it ends as he again goes about his rounds. This time, however, he is in the company of a young boy who is to take over his route and who is, in essence, a reincarnation of Ben as he once was--a boy who had ideas of bettering himself.

The experimentation with the flashback technique in O River, Remember! and the experimentation with multiple parallel events in Milk Route finds its fullest expression in The Sunset Tree. It begins with a prologue, "Prelude: The Articulate Forest", but instead of being organized by the juxtaposition of present and past time, like O River, Remember!, it is, like the chapters of Milk Route, organized by the principle of organic development. Part I, entitled "Dawn Reach", a term derived from the name of the growth period of a slime-mould, blends into Part II, "Night Reach", and culminates in the epilogue, "The Fruitful Wood", alluding to the fruiting period of the slime-mould.

Like the chapters of Milk Route, then, The Sunset Tree's sections are parts of a cycle, but whereas Milk Route deals with the development many characters undergo, this novel deals with the development of only one: Esther Clarke. Like O River, Remember! this novel proceeds by juxtaposition, but instead of juxtaposing past time and present time, it juxtaposes Esther's conscious exploration of her

apparent past, revealed in her conversations with a childhood friend, and her unconscious exploration of her real past as it exists in her memory. Because both pasts exist within Esther's mind, the concept of timelessness takes on a psychological dimension in addition to the historical one already posited in O River, Remember! Both the apparent and the real past point to one event in Esther's life--her disappointed love--and since she returns to the precise spot where that disappointment occurred, her life is a complete cycle. Furthermore, she overcomes this disappointment and is able to live her life as the individual she really is, and since she is linked, through many images, to the slime-mould, the novel reinforces the concept that both cyclical and linear time exist simultaneously. Time has passed and not passed for Esther, for she has at once developed to the point of fruition and has returned to her beginning.

In the interim, her life consists of a series of repeated events, each one directly related to the event which begins and ends her life. Each phase in her life is marked by the physical or metaphorical death of a man to whom she is closely tied, and in each phase, she is under the protection of a female who functions as a substitute for her dead mother. Furthermore, the significant events of her life, such as her birth, the affairs she has, and the novel itself, occur in May, and in many cases, these events are accompanied by storms. This repetition further enhances the concepts of the cyclical and simultaneous nature of time, which reinforces the theme of destiny.

A Man Had Tall Sons, the last novel which Ostenso wrote, is the culmination of the thematic investigation of time and destiny. The

most significant repeated events are Luke's marriages and the subsequent reemergence of his lost dream. Through the repetition of his former life as a married man, Luke comes to realize his basic error: "the straining to be reborn was not imposed...from without. It was a living pulse from within" (367). And this is the significance of the device of the repeated event and of the opportunity for a second choice: the life-force of its own accord strains toward regeneration; man cannot prevent this repetition, although he can prevent its repetition in himself. Luke's son, Mark, expresses this concept when he thinks, "growth and decay, living and dying, day and night and the wondrous rhythm of the season's turning--all were parts of the eternal symphony of being" (267). Luke, while in the process of repeating his past errors, labors under the delusion that although "the end was already in the beginning" it was "best not to know it" (119). He is unable to see, as Mark does, that "now is forever" (84), that all time is present within each individual moment. The individual himself is thus at once the beginning and the end of the life-force which gave him life, part of "the eternal symphony of being", the eternal process which works for the achievement of self-realization.

Through the exploration of the mythic figure of the tyrant, Ostenso explores in great detail the problem of self-realization as it relates to the individual's confrontation with the crime he has committed against the life-force. In essence, this crime is seen to be the denial of the potential for self-realization which every individual has, in order that some pragmatic end, usually the satisfaction of some

urge for pleasure, may be achieved. In the repeated exploration of the causes and effects of this denial, Ostenso becomes increasingly concerned with the problems involved in the psychology of self-realization as it relates not only to the tyrant, but to the interaction of various figures who are both subjected and in opposition to the tyrant and the tyrannizing force. These problems and their related themes are further explored through the images of the land, the dream, and the house. Along with this increasingly intense exploration, there is an increasing complexity of structural patterns and techniques which, prefigured in Wild Geese, develop to their fullest extent in The Sunset Tree and A Man Had Tall Sons.

What emerges as the fundamental problem in the process of self-realization is the nature of time or, the operation of destiny. To Ostenso, each individual is given the potential for self-realization, but as is evident in the figure subjected to the tyrant, not every one realizes this potential. Through the images and structural patterns of the novels, the reason for this failure is made clear. Each individual, at some point in his life, confronts a situation which determines whether or not he will be able to fulfill his destiny and achieve self-realization. He alone must make this choice and, by making a choice, he concretizes a portion of the "nameless and undreamed" forms which drift within the "unmeasurable Alone" (WG, 57) that surrounds every individual. Concretized, these forms become the dreams that the individual pursues or is pursued by.

If he makes the wrong choice and chooses to develop only a part of his nature, the unrealized forms will manifest themselves to

him in the form of the presentation of a second choice, a repetition of the initial choice. The future development of the individual is not negated by his first choice, a concept manifest in A Man Had Tall Sons. Rather, as is pointed out by The Young May Moon, the choice itself is irrevocable and the consequences, as is particularly true in The Sunset Tree, are inevitable. But these consequences constitute a form of education, for by living through the experience of what is a frustration of an arresting of development, the individual creates the opportunity to remake his first choice, since the unrealized portion of his nature is never destroyed, but is always present in the "Alone".

The theory of the balance of opposites, posited in Wild Geese and explored in the structural patterns of the succeeding novels, culminates in A Man Had Tall Sons, where the theory is seen to be a function of the "eternal symphony of being".

If, when presented with the second choice, the individual again chooses to deny the unrealized portion of his nature, he negates the possibility of any future choices. He has failed to benefit from the experience of following the first choice and is condemned to purposeless suffering. Why further choices are not allowed is best explained by the theory of the balance of opposites, which provides for the completion of two alternatives only, for only two alternatives provide both the energy and the opportunity for growth. Whatever does not contribute toward growth, such as the making of a second incorrect choice, has no purpose and is either destroyed, as is evident in the fate of the tyrants and their subjects in the early novels, or is condemned to eternal suffering.

The shift in the fact of the tyrant figure, discussed earlier, does not mean that the negation of the potential for self-realization is acceptable to the life-force; rather, it signifies a deeper understanding of that force, for those tyrants who do not die are allowed to live because they have either done something to further the operation of destiny, as is the case with Magdali, or they have done their damage and no longer threaten the life-force, as is the case with Matt. Furthermore, this later preservation and acceptance of the tyrant figure, as well as the preservation and acceptance of some of the other figures who have failed to make a correct second choice, constitutes another facet of the life-force which is implicit in the repetition of character and event in the works considered: the possibility of regeneration for these defeated individuals through the efforts of someone who is, in essence, their alter-ego.

Indeed, this possibility is necessitated by the theory of the simultaneity of time, for if all time is now and vice-verse, and if everything is part of the symphony of being, then ultimately no choice is irredeemable, no knot in time incapable of being untied, on the cosmic level. This concept is the point to which A Man Had Tall Sons brings us, for Luke Darr is a reworking of Caleb Gare. Both men marry for predominantly material reasons; both are troubled by a sense of inadequacy; both see their actions as revenge for wrongs committed against them; both are manipulators of human weaknesses and both commit murder. And what is most important is that both men are claimed by the symbolic manifestation of their basic crime and weakness. Caleb is destroyed by his wife just as surely as he is destroyed by his flax

field and by his land, for his field and land are, in effect, his wife; while Luke, as tyrant, is destroyed by the dahlia bulb, symbol of his dead wife, as well as by his son, Mark, who is also a representative of his wife. Caleb is thus regenerated by the efforts of his counterpart, Luke Darr, for Luke, unlike Caleb, merges with the life-force in spirit as well as in body through his repudiation of the partial existence he has led.

The loneliness in which each individual finds himself can be cured in only one way: the development of both halves of one's nature as well as through contact with human life, which involves the negation of the concept of duality. To develop only one half of one's nature is to not only misinterpret the nature of reality, but it is to attempt to stand alone, to be individualistic rather than to be an individual. Individuality involves the recognition and acceptance of both halves of one's nature and their equal development, as well as the recognition and acceptance of one's relationship with and responsibility to all life, the "symphony of being". Otherwise, life becomes purposeless; self-gratification, not self-realization.

CHAPTER THREE

DECLINE AND FALL

In Norse mythology, Ragnarök is the "day of doom", when all but a very few of the gods are destroyed by the forces of evil, to be followed by the creation of a new world. Martha Ostenso has taken this basic mythological pattern of decline, fall, and regeneration, and, as with the mythic figure of the tyrant discussed in Chapter Two, she has added psychological depth to the myth. She presents a recreation of the myth in four novels and three short stories, centering on the Midwest in The Mad Carews (1927), The Stone Field (1934), The Mandrake Root (1938), "The Storm" (1924), and "The Bridge" (1934); and on the Pacific Coast in The White Reef (1937) and "White Tryst" (1934).¹ An analysis of the basic images, themes, and structural patterns of these works further elaborates the problem of the integration of personality and the nature and function of the life-force posited in the works discussed in the previous chapter, and further demonstrates Ostenso's use of the basic structural devices of repetition and duality.

The basic plot structure of the works examined in this chapter is similar to that of the works in Chapter Two: a crime is committed by the patriarch of a large and influential family. His children labor under the burden of guilt for the crime and ultimately the family is destroyed or is displaced from the area, except for one son who is left to atone for the crimes of his forebears and thereby redeem their heritage. Part of the means to this redemption is a woman who is in-

timately involved in the crime committed. After undergoing a period of suffering and a regeneration akin to that of the atoning son, the woman eventually marries him and a new order is established. There are variations in the specific crime: in "The Storm" it is the son's betrayal of his father's craft and heritage; in "White Tryst" it is embezzlement, for which the daughter pays by marrying the claimant; and in "The Bridge" it is a doctor's betrayal of his profession. However, the general pattern of crime, atonement, and regeneration is maintained.

For Ostenso, the process of atonement and regeneration is the most significant part of the pattern outlined above. Her major theme, that life must go on, is based upon her conception, discussed in Chapter Two, that there is a life-force operating through all things which is potentially creative or destructive, depending upon the manner in which man comes to terms with it. The crime of the patriarch, like the crime of the tyrant, is a crime against this force, for he thwarts its creative potential, directing it to destructive ends. He pursues purely selfish interests at the expense of others, and brings about the doom of himself and his family. But since the life-force remains unchanged in its essentially dual nature, each generation has, like the generation before it, the opportunity to reverse the pattern set up by the patriarch by redirecting the creative potential of the life-force. It is these efforts to undo the wrongs of the past that Ostenso concentrates on, for in them she sees the efforts of man to conquer the negative aspects of himself and develop his personality to its fullest extent. Her techniques of repetition and duality in the treatment of theme, character, image, and structure are thus a reflection of this

process, since they are basic characteristics of the life-force.

Three general themes emerge from the basic mythic pattern of decline, fall, and regeneration, and each of these themes is made up of two sub-themes, halves of a duality. The theme that life must go on is linked, on the one hand, to the sub-themes of sensuality and vitality, facets of man's physical nature, and on the other, to the sub-theme of the necessity of aspirations or dreams, a facet of man's spiritual nature. This major theme is explored in the figures of the temptress and the vital male and the creative female, and in the images of the land, the swamp and the hill, flowers, and the dream. The theme of destiny, expanded through the sub-themes of the endurance of the past and the essential loneliness of man, is revealed in the vital male and the creative female, and in the images of birds and trees. The sub-themes of physical and spiritual regeneration and of the ambiguity of death are two facets of the third general theme, the integration of personality, and are investigated through the vital male and creative female and the images of the land, water, the swamp and the hill, flowers, and houses.

These general themes and their respective sub-themes stem from the basic conception of the existence of a life-force which must be faced for man to survive and flourish. This force is ultimately creative, but in order to perceive this, one must go through the process of atonement, suffering, purgation, and be regenerated. Only then does one have the necessary perspective--akin to that discussed at the end of Chapter Two--to be able to see that there is an eternal balance between the temporally creative and destructive potential of the life-

force. Once this perspective is achieved, life must still be faced, but it is faced by an integrated individual, not by a fragmented one.

Ostenso does not go beyond this initial, integrated state, for to do so would be somewhat anticlimactic. The works dealt with here are primarily concerned with the process of integration, the means by which man comes to terms with the life-force. The decline and fall aspects enter the pattern only to provide the necessary information required to transform the fall into a regeneration.

The figure of the patriarch-criminal is one of the means by which Ostenso explores the theme of destiny, for it is his sin which must be expiated before the atoning son can achieve the integration of his personality. As the works progress, the figure of the patriarch-criminal becomes further removed from the main action of the novels. This distancing enhances the legendary quality which surrounds him, and his crime becomes Ostenso's equivalent of original sin: the exploitation of the land and its occupants (except in The Mandrake Root, where the crime is committed by the son, and involves the thwarting of the life-force through his refusal to marry). This exploitation is accompanied by the withdrawal from the immediate working of the land by the patriarch and his children; the atoning son repays those exploited and returns to work the land himself. Thus he fulfills the Biblical precept, "by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread". The crime is attempting to eat bread by means other than hard work. There is no escape from the sins of the fathers; the crime must be paid for or destruction results, as is evident in the fate of young Ashbrooke Hilyard

of The Stone Field.

The theme of destiny is reinforced by the auxiliary figures in the novels. Various prophet figures appear, all of whom make prophecies concerning the fortune of the patriarch and his family, or who, as in the case of Ethan Ashe of The White Reef and Phineas Baggot of The Stone Field, take an active part in the destruction of the family. Further Biblical overtones occur in the demon figure who is, like Bart Leshner of The White Reef, or Nate Brazell of The Mad Carews, a constant threat not only to the patriarch's family, but also to the vital male and the creative female. To complete the Biblical overtones of the works, and to add to the legendary or mythological atmosphere, there is the figure of the siren or the temptress who may be, as is the case with Teresa in The Stone Field, and Eunice in The White Reef, the wife of the vital male, and is thus a further indication of the erosion of the moral fibre of the atoning son, an erosion initiated by the sin of the patriarch. She may also be, as is the case with Zenka in The Mad Carews, a sinister force to be contended with and denied by the vital male. Other figures, like the wandering minstrel and the "faithful servant", typified by Joe Tracy in The Mad Carews, and Lute Billings in The Stone Field, function as tests of the moral fibre of the creative female.

The vital male and the creative female, who repeatedly appear in all the novels are halves of a duality which expresses Ostenso's ideal integrated personality. The characteristics of both these figures

are essentially the same, although there are obvious social differences. Both figures are physically appealing, have either light or dark hair and either blue or "moss agate" eyes. Their union represents a union of light and dark, or sky and earth, for if the vital male figure has light hair and blue eyes, the creative female has dark hair and "moss agate" or very dark eyes. Both figures are very close to the earth, but it is the female who is the one most intimately tied to it, while the male is more concerned with things of the mind, even if they take the form of advanced agricultural methods. Whereas the female figure never leaves the land, the male always does, paralleling the pattern of action of the patriarch. But the male always returns. Once in contact with the soil, he feels "something rise within him that was not of his day or generation, but had persisted through birth and death from a time beyond recall".² This is parallel to the essential spiritual condition of the female, who feels a force within her "that had always held away from people, that could be given only to the solitude of earth and sky, no matter what the season" (SF,90). Both these inner forces are facets of the life-force, the one drawing from the past, and the other drawing from the present. Thus their union represents the union of past and present, as well as of light and dark and earth and sky.

Connecting the two figures even more closely and making them facets of the same personality is the fact that both are dreamers. The dreamer figure is the most pervasive in all of Ostenso's works, as nearly every character dreams, and it is through this figure as embodied in the vital male and the creative female that all characters and events

exist, connected by the theme of the integration of personality and by the necessity of dreams. The dreamer figure is characterized not only by the fact that he dreams, but by the fact that his dreams proceed out of an essential spiritual loneliness, like the dreams of the tyrant and guilt figures, and can be assuaged only by union with another dreamer. This union has, in the novels considered here, already taken place on one level, for each of the four novels begins with a dream and ends with a dream-like situation. Further, dream imagery and such associated images as trance, spell, enchantment, and nightmare recur, and are always connected with the vital male and the creative female.

In The White Reef, Nona's sexual escapade with Quentin is referred to as a "nightmare", and she entertains dreams of escape from the nightmare of the Cove, which is the nightmare of both her own past and that of the Cove for, in one of her dreams, she imagines herself in the time of St. Columba, after whom the church is named, and is thus connected not only to the cultural past of the Cove, but to the larger historical past of the world. This intricate relationship, coupled with the fact that her grandparents are "fabled figures" and the fact that in the Cove, the "form may change, but the soul of things is eternal",³ places the events of the novel in the timeless region of dreams where, Nona feels, "all of the past was woven into one piece with the present" (59).

The dream imagery connected with the two climactic scenes reinforces the concept that the novel is a dream in itself. Nona, after realizing that she has always been in love with Quentin Wingate, even when she believed she hated him, says, "I've been asleep for seven

years" (194). This seven-year period covers Nona's life from her first meeting with Quentin up to the present, reinforcing the idea that the novel is a recounting of her dreams during that seven-year sleep. This concept is confirmed by a similar admission on Quentin's part when, after he has rejected the physical appeal of his estranged wife, "his wife seemed oddly unfamiliar, as though he had merely dreamt her during some illness" (258). The period of his illness corresponds precisely to the period Nona has been asleep, and therefore what has not been recounted in her dream has been told in Quentin's. Furthermore, throughout this novel, both characters are obsessed by dreams of each other. It appears, then, that the novel is actually a dream which occurs in the minds of the two major characters, and since the dreams and the dreamers are parallel, there is ample justification for saying that the two characters are really facets of one another, each dreaming half of a common dream, and their union represents the integration of a psychologically fragmented personality.

This image of the common dream, and the host of dream and related images linking the vital male and creative female figures appears in The Mad Carews as well. Elsa feels that her life with Bayliss Carew has "become a myth",⁴ meaning that their life has become as timeless as their love and as enchantingly powerful. At the end of the novel, when they are reunited, Bayliss says, "I have dreamed your dream, Elsa--and another that is my own" (344). And after she has accepted his dream of draining the swamp, Elsa feels herself "gathered in toward him sensationally, into the throb of oblivion..." (346), the oblivion of their lovemaking.

Eric Stene's return to his family's homestead in The Mandrake Root "belonged to the shapeless dreams of his recent illness",⁵ again linking the image of the dream with the image of illness, a linkage intimately related to the theme of the integration of personality. His sleep is haunted by the image of Lydie Clarence, and their union is described in terms of sleep and dreams, for Lydie is a "slumbrous warmth" and comes "into his arms like some confessed and liberated part of his own being...an undreamt rapture" (192). The next morning, "he was still saturated with sleep--such a restoring and lush oblivion he could not remember having had since his boyhood" (193), which echoes Elsa's "oblivion" in The Mad Carews. Again, the image of the male and female united in sleep, dreaming the same dream, being parts of the same person both physically and psychologically, is repeated here, and is reinforced by Lydie's comment that Eric "has nothing to do with my real life" (229), although he has everything to do with her psychological life.

That The Stone Field begins with Jo Porte's dream of the Hilyard mansion is indicative that the novel is her dream, a contention borne out not only by the image of building mansions in the soul, but also by the dream imagery of the novel. Jo's first meeting with the Hilyards is a "stiff, dazzling dream" (29) wherein she feels that they exist in a "charmed circle" (45). She also dreams another major figure in the novel, Phineas Baggot, and passes into a "dreamful abstraction" thinking of Royce Hilyard. Indeed, all the characters and events in the work can be said to be the dreams of Jo and Royce, for between them, they dream everything of significance, including one another.

To Jo, Royce is a "glowing, dark thing at the back of her soul" (104), and to Royce, Jo is a "blurred and unreal thing", a "mad and unrecognizable other self" (187).

From this cursory analysis of the figures of the vital male and the creative female and their dreamer natures, it can easily be seen that the novels are actually dreams which occur in the minds of these two figures, and that these figures are really aspects of the same personality. Thus the novels in this chapter not only deal with the theme of the integration of personality on an individual level, a process discussed below in connection with specific images, but also with the integration of both figures into one personality, separated but linked by the common dream, and united at the end of each novel in one dream, ready to begin another cycle of life, in harmony with one another and with the life-force.

Ostenso's most significant use of her techniques of repetition and duality is in the recurrent images of the novels considered here. Each image reinforces and develops both theme and character, for the images are external manifestations of the state of mind of the central figures of the works, so that the reaction of a character to an image is a guide to the stage of development or degeneration he has achieved. The imagery of this group of novels is dominated by the image of the land itself, the principal element in the crime committed against the life-force. This image has three facets, each one linked to one of the principal themes, and each one composed of a duality. Through the image of the land as creative and destructive the theme of destiny is

explored, which is connected to the patriarch-criminal and the vital male figures. The land is also linked to a physical-spiritual duality, through which the theme of the integration of personality is explored, connected with the creative female. And through the image of the land as temporal and eternal, the theme that living goes on is investigated, which is intimately connected to both the central figures.

The link between the land and the crime of the patriarch through the creative-destructive nature of the land is delineated in The Stone Field. Here, the land which the patriarch, Ashbrooke Hilyard, ruthlessly took from its rightful owner, Phineas Baggot, voices its laws through him: "'a man can break God's laws and be forgiven.... But when he breaks Nature's laws, there's no forgiveness--and there's no escape. Sooner or later he pays the penalty, or his children pay it--or his children's children. It doesn't matter much. It must be paid'" (63-64). This becomes the basic rationale for all the works in this chapter. Ashbrooke pays the penalty, as does his son Leonard: both die on the land they have conquered. But once the crime has been paid for, the land loses its destructive nature, and can be converted to productivity. Royce Hilyard begins work on the stone field on the first day of May, traditionally the time at which the regeneration of the soil is celebrated, and he himself undergoes a regeneration, for he feels the spirits of his ancestors "rising within him like a waking memory" (259). Through the return to the soil of his past, the atoning son achieves victory over himself and his ancestors' crimes, and redeems all that is valuable in the past. Through "the work he was destined to

do" he obtains a "freedom to live", "freedom of body and soul", for it is "out of the hard and somber spirit of this...earth" (256) that he draws his vitality.

The crime of the fathers is a crime against the life-force, as Phineas Baggot's laws of Nature indicate, and in "The Bridge" and The Mandrake Root, the theme of regeneration through total involvement with the life-force is clearly defined. William Oliver, the doctor in "The Bridge", feels that "life, its affirmation and denial, was no longer the fountained ecstasy of [his] soul".⁶ Similarly, Eric Stene, in The Mandrake Root, feels that "the Stene line in America comes to an end with me....If Nature insists on carrying out her fell design to keep the world populated, she can count me out" (22). But the life-force claims them both: Oliver is forced by circumstances to save the life of a pregnant woman, and Stene fathers a child on his return to his father's homestead.

In the reaction of the creative female to the physical-spiritual duality of the land, there is a parallel to the regeneration undergone by the vital male through his reaction to the creative-destructive duality of the land. To survive and flourish on the land as an integrated human being, the female figure must respond both physically and spiritually to it. To respond in a physical manner alone is destructive, as is demonstrated by the reaction of Elsa Bower to Joe Tracy in The Mad Carews: "where Joe Tracy went there would Elder's Hollow be", she muses, and sees that Joe merely "[searches] out the earth with his body; with his mind, never" (81-82). To search out the earth with one's body is to live entirely within the physical, Elsa realizes, "subjecting her

spirit forever to the dull, crass tyranny of her body" (213). Passive acceptance of the land means that one ultimately becomes stunted, bent to the earth, dehumanized, for one's mind and spirit in this state are crippled. But there is a choice: "when you lived in the Hollow you accepted such things as cracked wall-paper and the smell of stale dinner pails--or you rebelled against them" (109). The way of rebellion, like the way of atonement, involves suffering: "this wistful dwelling upon the past, this painful seeking out of the future, this constant hunger of the mind for what is lost, for what may never be found" (130). Without this suffering engendered by what is essentially a spiritual loneliness, a mental hunger, one goes on "building a structure of illusion on a small, uncertain shred of fact; a vast, domeless house of the spiritual on the mean, unsure foundation of the physical" (137), like Esther Clarke of The Sunset Tree.

Once the spiritual anguish resulting from rebellion against the merely physical, tyrannical facets of the land is undergone, the creative female becomes free and whole, arriving, like Elsa, at the point where "the whole universe about her became a human rhythm. She felt beneath her the breathing of the great, dark lungs of the earth, the tremendous excitement of its vast heart, and above it, white stars and fair space, dreams of its mighty spirit. Life, love--dreams these, too" (270). Rebellion not only transforms the tyranny of the physical aspect of the land into something human, creative, and dreaming, but since it is "as much a part of the great scheme of things as any clash of armies in the field", it is creative, the "bitter, whirling flame out of which new worlds took shape and were sent spinning into space"

(94-95). Acceptance, stasis, is therefore not merely unnatural, it is death; for without rebellion no new worlds can take shape, no realization of the creative potential of the life-force is possible, and no integration of the physical and spiritual facets of the personality can occur.

Through the image of the land as a manifestation of timelessness in time, the theme that living goes on is explored, and the character of the vital male and the creative female figures developed. This duality functions as a point of reference for these figures, by which their spiritual development is both determined and gauged. The choice to accept or rebel is made with respect to this duality, as in the case of Elsa Bowers of The Mad Carews, for she sees her struggle with Joe Tracy as a "fight against that irresistible force which sought ever to turn back to the earth that which was the earth's" (81).

Royce Hilyard, in The Stone Field, has suffered spiritual anguish and physical exhaustion on the stone field, and in viewing this suffering with respect to the temporal-eternal duality of the land, he typifies the reaction of the vital male and the creative female to this suffering: "these were his...acres by a right that none could purchase.Destiny, through him, was taking hold again, moving toward its unforgettable end, shaping its eternal and productive processes. He could not hope to sound the mystery of Nature's purposes...but he knew himself to be a part of her design and yielded himself gloriously to its making" (260). Having been regenerated through his conflict with the destructive elements of the life-force, Royce is prepared to convert the destructive potential into productivity. His recognition and

acceptance of the duality of the land, like that of Lydie Clarence in The Mandrake Root, characterizes him as an earth deity, for he and the land are functions of one another. Both Royce and Lydie see that the earth has always existed and produced despite natural and human cataclysms, and both recognize that, except for the time "when everything would crumble and cease to be--everything except the dark land and the bright sky, and the eternal, secret, and inscrutable force that worked in between...living would go on" (TMR,15).

The recurring images of water, the swamp and the hill, birds, trees, flowers, and houses reinforce the wider perspective of these novels. They derive their power from their reference to the "inscrutable force" operating between earth and sky: the life-force. And since this force is composed of a duality, the images also embody a duality, which adds to the significance of the characters in the works, for the images are concomitants of the state of mind of these characters.

Water images, like the image of the land, have a dual nature in this group of novels, connected to the theme of regeneration through the baptismal function of water. Baptism means, in effect, the death of the old self and the birth of the new through the purifying effect of water, and wherever water appears in these works, death and life are associated with it. For example, Nona Darnell, in The White Reef, goes to a pool in the forest, looks into its depths, and says, "oh, beauty--beauty! Save me from bitterness and horror--let me keep you within me forever" (114); and after having dived into the pool, she

emerges, "her mind empty" (125), which signifies the death of the old self. Immersion in water thus becomes equivalent to leaving the cycle of life for a moment--"dying"--and returning with mind and body cleansed, ready to begin again in the cycle of life.

Water in the form of rain also has its destructive element, for it always precedes or accompanies some human crisis. Storms accompany Elsa's arguments with Bayliss in The Mad Carews; rain precedes the death of old Ashbrooke Hilyard in The Stone Field; a storm wrecks Quentin's boat and his dreams in The White Reef; rain precedes and accompanies the sexual union of Eric and Lydie in The Mandrake Root; and in "The Storm", "The Bridge", and "White Tryst", the climactic incidents occur in rain-storms. Indeed, this use of rain as a portent of change occurs in almost all of Ostenso's works, and demonstrates the most significant use of the water image: its regenerative capacity.

In this capacity, water has "the astounding enigma of creation in it" (WR,38), and contact with it or even proximity to it elicits its life-giving force. Eric Stene goes for a swim in the river, and upon emerging, "he discovered to his surprise that he had recaptured something of the free and spaceless delight he had known in his boyhood" (TMR,270). Even death by water is life-giving, as in The White Reef, where the sea that claims the life of Nona's illegitimate son is the same sea on which the boy's father returns. It is on the riverbank that Eric and Lydie confess their love for one another, and it is on the lake that Jo and Royce, in The Stone Field, overcome the emotional impasse that held them apart. And through the rain image, the sacramental function of water is delineated, for at the end of The White Reef and "The

Bridge", rain falls as the vital male and the creative female unite; dew falls on Elsa and Bayliss at the end of The Mad Carews; and rain falls as Eric and Lydie unite sexually and again when they unite spiritually. Although water in all its forms is presented as having both destructive and creative capabilities, total involvement with it, like total involvement with the various dualities of the land, is lifegiving because it is regenerative.

In the recurrent images of the swamp and the hill, the theme of the integration of personality is continued, for each image helps define the psychological state of each of the major figures. Furthermore, through the sexual symbolism of these images, as well as through their psychological significance, the dynamics of this integration are explored in detail and its connection with the theme that living goes on is examined. That the swamp and the hill are functions of one another is manifest in this description of them in The Mad Carews: "then there was the Mountain, of course, rising from the southern edge of the hollow, as if the great hand that had scooped out the earth along those two miles of reeking bog had piled it in a neatly rounded dome where the sun was always brightest in summer" (5). Both images are therefore halves of a duality, and their relationship to the theme of the integration of personality is apparent when one realizes that the swamp image is primarily associated with the creative female, while the hill image is primarily associated with the vital male.

The swamp is linked with destruction and with the purely physical, and in this aspect it becomes an image of total dependence, sheer

animal existence, "one small, terrible part of life, beating down all the rest" (MC,86) which must be kept in check, for to allow this part of life to have free rein would be to "live in [the] body entirely, in [the] mind not at all" (MC,135), an existence which would "reap no rich harvest" but would lead to "poverty and squalor and drudgery, and contempt...or beastliness"(MC,87). But the swamp is not entirely destructive, for it does produce a few beautiful things, such as the wild rose in bloom over the grave of five newborn rabbits in The Stone Field. To recognize that the rose blooms from destruction, that death is not a final state but a stage in the cycle of life, is the first step away from the swamp.

To attempt to flee from the swamp, to deny it completely, is not only cowardice but folly, for then life, as Jo Porte realizes, becomes an "opening of a gold, blind door upon a black corridor of terror" (SF,49). The way out of the swamp is through it, for only by going through it comes the recognition that the potential for life is as much a part of the swamp as the actuality of death. Only by an active, not a passive or complacent involvement with the swamp can this realization occur, which turns the actuality of death into new life. And once this understanding comes, one moves from the swamp to the hill where, as Elsa fancies, she and her husband, harmoniously united, "would see the dark, crinkled fields in a wet spring; they would see the frail shoots that traced a pale green design through the red-brown earth in early summer; they would look out upon the swaying gold of the ripe grain in August; and they would be intimates of the stark, hollow prairie under the Autumn sky. They would live here close to beauty, and pity, and

growth, and death. What was life if you could not experience these, as the earth experienced them?"(MC,199).

Psychologically, the swamp, through its associations with darkness, destruction, and the merely physical, has strong overtones of the negative elements of the unconscious. And in its capacity to give life as well as take it, it is associated with the dynamic potential of the unconscious. That the swamp must be controlled lest it "beat down the power to live and accomplish limitless things" (MC,92) is analogous to the problem of channeling the dark forces of the unconscious into productive, not destructive, endeavors. Finally, the movement from swamp to hill--a movement from dark to light--but still retaining the swamp as a field of action, corresponds to the movement from unconsciousness to consciousness, from complete dependence in an undifferentiated state to the mature, differentiated state, wherein the free play of both the physical and the spiritual planes of life is achieved. Elsa describes the cosmic implications of the movement from the swamp to the hill as she thinks of her life and the life of Bayliss being "like trails meeting--one out of the reedy waste of Elder's Hollow, the other out of the rich, insolent fields of the Carews, meeting and running together under the wind, under the flowing of the seasons, the flowing of time" (MC,127). The integration of personality achieved through the encounter with the swamp of the unconscious thus becomes a step to a larger integration with the male figure and ultimately, with the universe.

On a sexual level, the swamp--or the hollow--becomes a symbol of the female, and indeed, the swamp in all the works considered here belongs, physically, to the female. To live completely within the swamp

is therefore to be subjected to the tyranny of the body, causing the woman to sacrifice her identity for her hunger for physical love and fulfillment. For the male, it means an insouciant, complacent existence in which he is "turned under in the furrow...his very life made a part of the breathing soil" (MC,226). In both cases, total involvement with the merely physical to the exclusion of the mental or spiritual is a form of return to the womb: security and peace are attained at the expense of individuality. The psychological umbilical cord must be severed. Once this is done, the swamp changes its character and becomes a place which can be turned to productive purposes.

The hill is primarily associated with the vital male figure, and like the swamp, it has a dual nature. Although it is sunny and has the richest soil in the area, it is potentially destructive, since it is made from the soil of the swamp. In The Mad Carews, and in The Stone Field, the hill belongs to the male figure and is his field of action. In the last two novels of this group, the hill does not appear as a hill per se: in The White Reef it is a promontory on which a woman committed suicide because she could not have the gay life of the vital male's family; and in The Mandrake Root, it is an orchard on a small rise, which belongs to the vital male figure. Neither of these variations alters the significance of the hill: it is not only the midpoint between earth and sky, but it is an uncultivated or neglected area, and thus represents a spiritual and physical wasteland which must be converted to productivity by the male figure. In The Stone Field, Len Hilyard dies in the attempt to make the stony hill produce; but his son, Royce, carries on his work and succeeds. Bayliss, in The Mad Carews,

builds a house on the hill for himself and Elsa, and in The White Reef, Quentin's presence in the Cove forces Nona to go to the promontory and choose between love or hatred for Quentin, and his presence with her in her mind makes her realize that love, not hatred, will give them both life.

The attempt to flee from the task or to achieve the crest of the hill without effort is doomed to failure. Royce senses that his youthful departure from the hill was "the folly of his youth" (SE,276) and that his real place is on the hill. Eric Stene, in The Mandrake Root, sees his reconstruction of the orchard house as a challenge to "him and his arid nihilism as well as [to] the destructive forces of nature" (56). Only through hard physical and spiritual labor can the vital male regenerate himself, for the hill is not only a physical barrier, it is a "barren solitude...where nothing obscured the spirit from itself" (WR,197-98). It is a "biblical expanse", the source of new life in the form of spiritual revelation: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help".

The sexual symbolism of the hill is patent; the male's conquest of the hill is equivalent to the realization of his masculine identity, and he does his most creative physical and spiritual work on the hill. For the female, her conquest of the hill becomes the realization of the masculine principle within herself, as well as her union with the male. But to view the hill in purely sexual terms is not as fruitful as applying those same terms to the swamp, for the dominant imagery associated with the hill is of a spiritual-psychological nature.

As "biblical expanse", wasteland, and the mid-point between earth and sky, the hill becomes the place of spiritual revelation. Further, it becomes the domain of the conscious mind, and the conquest of it becomes the achievement of consciousness. And since the hill is made of the soil of the swamp, the conquest of it becomes the symbol of making the unconscious conscious, turning it into a constructive force. Only at this mid-point is life lived fully, "close to growth, and pity, and beauty, and death", as is particularly evident in The Mad Carews. Here one can conquer death, as in The White Reef; here it is that the male faces the crime of the past, as in The Stone Field; or where he faces his own spiritual sickness and cures his physical ailments as well, as in The Mandrake Root.

Ultimately, the swamp and the hill are places of purgation, where the figures become integrated separately and together. Through their association with the male and female figures, the images of the swamp and the hill become another set of indices with which to gauge the progress each figure has made toward the integration of his personality, as well as indices to the identification of the vital male and the creative female.

The imagery of birds, trees, and flowers adds yet another dimension to the symbolic and thematic landscape of the novels considered in this chapter. In addition to denoting the spiritual state of the central male and female figures, they amplify each of the major themes. Bird imagery is primarily associated with the creative female, and is connected to the loneliness and spiritual longing facet of the

theme of destiny. In The Mad Carews, the flight of the wild duck is directly connected with Elsa's state of mind, for she wants to flee the Hollow as the ducks do. In The Stone Field, the image of the wild duck is repeated and its significance expanded from the simple "flight" of The Mad Carews. Looking at the ducks going south, Jo feels "as if something is escaping from within herself to that shrill, swift-winged turmoil that came from the unknown and vanished into the unknown again" (9). The flight of the migratory birds comes to represent the desire of the creative female not only to escape, through its reflection of her own loneliness, but to become one with the birds, to "try her wings" in the unknown, and is therefore connected with the theme of the integration of personality.

Tree imagery is primarily linked to the vital male figure, and is used to enhance the other facet of the theme of destiny, the endurance of the past. The protective, life-giving function of trees outlined in The Mad Carews, where the house Bayliss builds is in "the protection of the great oaks", is expanded in The Stone Field. Here, the woods are the only barrier between the Hilyard tenants and the drying winds of the prairie, and young Ashbrooke Hilyard's removal of them turns the forest into a wasteland, an abandoned world. This removal is more than a betrayal of the Hilyards' ancestral promise never to cut the trees; it is the betrayal of life itself, for not only do the trees die, but the hopes and farms of the brush farmers die with them. For his crime, Ashbrooke pays with his life, for "'man is a child of Nature. When he turns against his mother--he's done'" (63), as Phineas puts it.

When Nona and Quentin, in The White Reef, go to the Indian burying grounds, the "spirit trees", Quentin realizes through his contact with the ghosts in the grove that he too has been plagued by the spirits of his past in the form of people he has known. Because of this realization, he vows to Nona that he will affirm his love for Nona by rejecting his divorced wife. And in a grove of birches, "Quentin's arms closed about her. She heard only the voice of her own being--Quentin Wingate should never hurt her again" (239). The past emerges as both benevolent and crippling in the image of the tree; and by facing its crippling nature, like Quentin, and not trying to destroy it, like Ashbrooke, one achieves liberty and the past once again becomes protective and creative.

Flower imagery also recurs in the works under consideration, and like the bird imagery, it is primarily associated with the female figure. Thematically, this imagery illuminates the theme that life goes on as well as the theme of the ambiguity of death. Timothy Entwistle, a flower fancier in The White Reef, creates new varieties of flowers and names them after people he has known and loved, thus preserving their personalities forever, for the color and texture of each flower corresponds to the "color and texture" of the person after whom it is named. In The Stone Field, the theme that life goes on in spite of death, manifested in the image of the rose growing from the spot where five newborn rabbits died, is lifted to a greater significance in the image of the love for Royce which blossoms in Jo Porte's heart from the scar on her left shoulder, a wound received when she saved Royce's sister from being trampled by horses. This love began when Royce, in carrying Jo to a

doctor, realized the appeal she had for him. Through the image of the Indian pipe flower, the theme that life goes on even because of death appears, and is related to the theme of the integration of personality. This plant blooms "only out of a myriad of other tiny deaths" (SF,283), and Jo's plucking the flowers is a reflection of her own living on the "deaths" connected with her frustrated love for Royce. But looking down at the plants after refusing to allow her frustrations to destroy her, Jo sees them as "limp, slimy, disgusting things now" (SF,284), and she throws them away, reflecting her own rejection of dwelling on her past sufferings and "deaths". Flowers in The Mandrake Root are "forever renewing themselves in the mystery of birth" (4) to Lydie, and this event summarizes the thematic significance of the flower image.

The most pervasive imagery in this group of works is that of houses, and like several other images, the house has two aspects, linked with the two central figures, the vital male and the creative female. The house of the female figure is generally shabby in appearance, built in a low-lying area, and is set in opposition to the house of the male figure. His house is usually grand in appearance, well-landscaped, and is built where it can be easily seen, thus reflecting his family's dominance over the countryside. The two houses are separated by a physical barrier which must be crossed by the creative female, and by a spiritual barrier which must be crossed by the vital male. Through the process discussed in connection with the image of

the swamp and of the hill, the barrier is broken, an emblem of the negation of the social, cultural, sexual, and spiritual differences between the two figures. Both characters are thus left free to build their own house, or to infuse the male's house (both physically and genealogically) with new life, a parallel to their physical and spiritual freedom to build a new life together. Ultimately, the image of the house is linked to the basic problem considered in this group of works: the regeneration of life.

In The Mad Carews, the essence of the Bower's house finds its expression in the pigweed house that Elsa has built, which "smelt of the earth, and stillness...and all the drowse and timelessness of summer" (19). Like it, the Bowers' house is a sanctuary, "four walls and a roof, sheltering and warming human creatures" (14). But it is precisely this security which must be guarded against and finally escaped from, for to remain in either the pigweed house of childhood or the warm house of adolescence is never to achieve independence. To escape to the fabulous house of the Carews is to enter an unreality, for it had "somehow escaped from between the covers of an old story book" (126). It is shadowed by a "cloudy enchantment" born of "the dark of infidelities and jealousies and discords" (250) among the Carews. Caught between the house of adolescence and the house of illusion, Elsa experiences "an acute loneliness, a realization that she belonged nowhere" (174). But there is a way out of the loneliness: the denial of both influences in order to pursue one's own life, a struggle which leaves Elsa free to realize her dream of building her own house with Bayliss out of the strength of a love won through physical and spiritual anguish.

The image of building a house is continued in The Stone Field, where its symbolic significance as the house of the body and soul is expanded. Jo calls the Hilyard house a "stately mansion", a phrase taken from Holmes' poem, "The Chambered Nautilus". By cooking and cleaning for Royce, without his consent, after his family has left the house for good, Jo builds her "stately mansion" in the ruins of the Hilyard house. In helping to rebuild this mansion, she is rebuilding herself, for the imagery of rooms opening onto larger rooms is connected with every new development of her life. Royce also builds out of the ruin of the old house, for his clearing of the stone field and thereby atoning for the patriarch's crime is analogous to his occupying the patriarch's tower room and writing a biography of the old man, based on the old man's chronicles of the opening of the Midwest. Both Jo and Royce, then, are engaged in parallel efforts: they are building themselves out of the ruins of their common bond--the heritage of the past.

In The White Reef, the Wingate house, symbol of the Wingate's grandeur and their crime, as well as the symbol of Nona's memories of the ecstasy and the agony of her young love for Quentin, is burned down and the negative aspects destroyed, leaving only the memory of the positive aspects of the Wingate history, a family of opportunists in the fishing industry, as well as the memory of Nona's young love embodied in her recollections of the house, out of which Quentin and Nona will build a new house.

In The Mandrake Root, the final development of the house image is seen in this group of novels. Eric Stene repairs the sod house of his grandfather, evoking the "persistent" pioneer spirit of the walls

that challenge his "arid nihilism" as well as the "destructive forces of nature" (56). His efforts also represent a "fresh beginning, in which he hoped to derive from the old tired elements a new compound within himself" (57). "Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul!" (SF,5) Jo reads, and this building of mansions in the soul is the significance of the house imagery of the works dealt with in this chapter, for to build a physical house is a metaphor for building the body, the house of the soul.

An analysis of the major structural patterns of the works considered here, like the analysis of the major figures and images, reveals in greater detail Ostenso's handling of the basic mythic pattern of decline, fall, and regeneration. One of the major structural principles of the works is duality, not only in theme, major figures, and image, but also in the pattern of character presentation. All characters are presented in pairs, as is most evident in the figures of the vital male and the creative female. Secondary characters are also presented in pairs, and each pair demonstrates a facet of the relationship between the vital male and the creative female. This duality not only reinforces the theme of destiny, but adds depth to the theme of the integration of personality, and, indirectly, to the theme that life goes on.

In The Stone Field, the relationship between Jo's mother and father is flawed: the mother is imaginative and musically talented, a potentially whole individual, while her husband is easy-going, unimaginative, and down-to earth. This pairing of opposites presents a way of

life which is ultimately destructive for both individuals, for not only is the marriage barren after the birth of Jo, but the mother has come to sound "as if the bird that had once a sweet song had got caught in her throat and was strangling there" (10), while the father becomes enslaved to the land. And in order to remain alive, the strangling bird looks forward to the yearly arrival of Ned Larkin, the hired man with the bird-like name. Jo sees "frighteningly, a likeness between Ernest Porte and--Lute Billings. ...in her narrow life, was there anything more in store for her than her mother had been given?" (87) The similarity with Ned is there as well, if only in the name. Later in the novel, Jo denies Lute because she realizes that he would mean the strangulation of her free spirit, the failure to realize her potential; for Lute, like her father, is enslaved to the land. This pairing of the imaginative and the unimaginative is one of the major auxiliary pairings of the works under consideration, serving to demonstrate the theme of the necessity of dreams in order that life might be something more than strangulation.

Another major pairing is that of the sensual woman with the vital male, his vitality proceeding from the harmonious union of his mind and body. Like the unimaginative male, the sensual female is destructive because she is fragmented, "burning on the surface, with the tiredness of ash underneath" (TMR,27), and union with her is a "sterile, naked, and destroying passion", for she desires only to "possess her own fierce and delicious senses" (TMR,23). The rejection of the sensual female by the vital male is parallel to the creative female's rejection of the unimaginative male, and the union between the vital male and the

creative female is thus a union of free spirit with free body, a fully integrated individual.

To underline this union, a third major pairing is delineated, but rather than being a marriage, the relationship is a purely physical one. In The Mad Carews and The Stone Field, the best friend of the creative female becomes sexually involved with the vital male's brother, a union ending in destruction for the woman. The function of this pairing is to demonstrate to the creative female that a purely sexual capitulation to the vital male (something she is tempted towards) is destructive. For the male figure, this pairing serves as a test of his integrity, for in both works, he first defends his brother, a sign that he is still proud of his family and his heritage, and then rejects him, a sign of his humility and freedom from the crimes of the family.

Other pairings revolve about this sensual union, and in every case, the partners in the pairing have a close affinity with the vital male and the creative female. As is apparent, the structural pattern of the pairing of opposites serves to demonstrate that the novels in question are concerned with the union of a fragmented personality, for not only are the pairs interrelated, but they also play a major role in the development of the relationship between the two central figures. The cause of the fragmentation stems from the crime of the patriarch, and the union of the vital male and the creative female represents yet another means by which the crime is expiated and the life-force's creative potential realized, for the children of such a union will not labor under the burden of guilt for their father's crime.

The repetition of events is the second major structural pattern

of the works, serving to reinforce the theme of destiny. For the male figure, the return to the land and his subsequent struggle with it, himself, and the crime of the patriarch, is the most significant recurrent situation in his life, for it is the same pattern which his ancestors have gone through, but unsuccessfully. The Carew family of The Mad Carews and the Hilyard family of The Stone Field always return to the soil, no matter what their previous crimes against it may have been, and this return signifies a return to the fundamental problem of their lives: their attitude to the life-force as evidenced by their attitude to the soil and the people on it. This return is repeatedly brought about through the operation of destiny until the problem is solved and the soil made to produce through the personal efforts of the family. In The White Reef, where the crime is but one generation removed from the vital male, and in The Mandrake Root, where the crime is actually perpetrated by the vital male, this pattern of return and regeneration occurs, but attention is focussed increasingly on the atoning son until it is he who commits the crime, a development which reflects the development of Ostenso's conception of the significance of the pattern of decline, fall, and regeneration. The crime that has been committed which initiates the pattern is really an expression of the fundamental problem of the integration of personality, for it is because the patriarch fails to realize his potential that he commits the crime, as is clear in The Mandrake Root, where Eric is, in a sense, the patriarch.

For the female figure, the repeated confrontation with the vital male is the central fact of her existence, supported by a gradual movement away from the confining life of her childhood to a more fruitful

adult life, a pattern which culminates in the integration of her personality. These confrontations occur in a set pattern: infatuation, followed by a prolonged period of hatred, culminating in a form of love much higher than that experienced initially, for both figures undergo a complementary purgation in the period of hatred. The complementary nature of the lives of the vital male and the creative female corresponds exactly to the complementary nature of their inner selves, reinforcing the theme of the integration of personality, the fulfillment of a common destiny.

Duality and repetition in theme, major figures, image, and structural pattern are the basic structural principles of the works considered in this chapter. These two principles can be seen in the light of three major methods of development: duality, dialectic, and evolution, the principal ways in which the life-force operates. Between the poles of the dualities present in the works a current is set up, uniting the two poles yet retaining their identity, as is evidenced by the encounters between the vital male and the creative female. The poles can also be seen as thesis and antithesis, as is evident in the light-dark imagery associated with these figures. Their union becomes a synthesis, strikingly illustrated in The Mad Carews: Elsa thinks of the child of her marriage with Bayliss as "that other being, but with a soul that was half Elsa Bowers" (345). This concept of a dialectic is particularly true of the vital male's encounter with his past, in which the baser elements are purged, and a new, more vital life results. Finally, the use of duality and repetition can be seen in evolutionary

terms, as is apparent in the use of the "chambered nautilus" as the dominant image of The Stone Field, or the use of the house image in The Mandrake Root.

Each image in the works discussed here is a part of a larger organism--the work itself. And, like any organism, there is a development from one stage to the next. This development is, on the one hand, a process of increasing simplification, and on the other, a process of increasing complexity. Many of the images which occur in the early works disappear in the later ones, subsumed in a few central images. In The Mad Carews and The Stone Field, the crime of the patriarch is a crime against the land first and against life second, but in The White Reef, the crime of the patriarch is secondary in importance to the crime of the son, Quentin's jilting of the pregnant Nona, an overt crime against the life-force. In The Mandrake Root, the crime of the patriarch disappears and its place is taken by the crime of the son, which is Eric's direct denial of the life-force through his refusal to procreate. Furthermore, there is an increasing emphasis placed upon the creative female in the later novels, corresponding to the increasing emphasis on the vital male; but this emphasis is not only a movement toward greater complexity: in that each figure becomes more universal in stature, subsuming the characteristics of the minor figures and therefore eliminating them, there is a movement towards simplification, at least structurally. The number of themes explored increases from novel to novel, and along with this there is an increasing simplification in structure, with most of the action concentrated in the relationship between the vital male and the creative female.

Ostenso has, in these four novels, taken a basic pattern of mythology and literature and has reworked it until it becomes not only an application of that pattern to specific locales, but an application which emphasizes the significance of that pattern: regeneration, or the integration of a fragmented personality. The figures of these works come to represent facets of one personality, and the progression of the works indicates an increasing awareness of the dynamics of the development of personality. This development is ultimately, in The Mandrake Root, reduced to the solution of one central problem: the operation of the life-force, and the necessity for man to come to terms with that force which exists within himself and within his external environment. The process by which man comes to accept the life-force is clearly delineated in The Mandrake Root, and through this acceptance, not only is the heritage of the past made secure, but the heritage given to the future is created in the present and out of the present, a heritage not of decline but of the regeneration of personality.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE VITAL MALE AND THE CREATIVE FEMALE

The figures of the vital male and the creative female have been explored in previous chapters through their connection with the larger framework created by their parents. In Chapter Two, it was created by the crime of the tyrant against the life-force, and in the works considered in Chapter Three, by the crime of the patriarch against the life-force. The function of the vital male and the creative female in those works was to react against the crime: in the case of the tyrant, they reaffirmed the denied creative potential of the life-force; while in the case of the patriarch, they redirected the thwarted creative potential. In Prologue to Love (1932), There's Always Another Year (1933), and Love Passed This Way (1942), these two figures assume primary importance, and while they are still part of a larger framework, the emphasis is on the creative potentiality of their relationship.¹

The works in this group, it should be noted, represent something of a deterioration in Ostenso's presentation of her vision, in contrast to the novels explored in previous chapters. Although the essential concerns of the vision are still present, they are more conspicuously marred, perhaps due to their concentration on the love theme, for there is an effusiveness characteristic of the popular romance of the day. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to continue to explore the novels because they do contain some positive elements interesting in relation to her works as a whole.

The basic plot structure of these works is the same. The male and female meet and intuitively recognize the potential love which exists between them, a potential which is denied until they both confront some external influence which impedes them. Variations in the plot centre on the nature of the external influence which, in Prologue to Love and Love Passed This Way, is the supposed crime of the father of the creative female, consisting of the "murder" of an individual closely connected with the life of the vital male. Because of this crime and her resultant guilt feeling, the female denies the love of the male, but ultimately, like the guilt figure, she must confront it through confessing her fears to him. In There's Always Another Year, the external influence is two-fold: the creative female denies the love of the vital male because of her father's crime and her previous involvement with another man, and the male denies the love of the female because of his wife. In both cases, a mutual confrontation and confession is required before the potential love can be realized.

In all three works, the most significant element of the plot is that both figures must face the external influence together. By doing so, they realize the creative potential of the life-force left unfilled by the supposed crime in their mutual past, as well as the potential of their own lives. There is neither a tyrannizing force nor a heritage as such to be contended with; rather, there is only an unfilled potential to be realized by individuals who are ultimately facets of one personality.

Three basic themes knit the structures of the works together.

Like the themes in previous works, each theme is composed of a duality. The theme of time, made up of the sub-themes of the influence of the past and the operation of destiny, is explored through the parallel lives of the vital male and the creative female. The sub-themes of loneliness, explored through the dream imagery of the works, and fulfillment, explored through the dream imagery and the image of the land, make up the theme of the integration of personality. The third major theme, death, is explored through the actual and metaphorical deaths of various individuals. In both cases, death is seen to be destructive and creative, and is linked with the crucial points in the lives of the central male and female figures.

The theme of the dual nature of death is explored through the figure of the father. Jarvis Dean of Prologue to Love is implicated in the death of Geoffrey Landor, his wife's lover. Jarvis, plagued by the memory of his wife's infidelity and the accidental shooting death of her lover, at which he was present, withdraws into himself. Not only does he withdraw from the land, allowing his life to become a "vast ruin",² but he also attempts to keep his secret from his daughter, Autumn, by sending her abroad and by opposing her love for Bruce, Geoffrey's son. These attempts prove futile, and Autumn and Bruce, contending with the significance of Geoffrey's death, are able to conquer their respective anxieties and marry.

Jim Grenoble, in There's Always Another Year, is the inversion of Jarvis, for after his wife's death, he took his daughter, Silver, and left his land to become a gambler and land speculator, involving Silver in various schemes to the point where she succumbs to one of his hangers-

on. Learning this, Jim attempts to quit his activities and return to the farm, now rented by an old friend, Roddy Willard. But he is prevented by his own death in a brawl in which he wounds a man. Silver returns to the land, denying the love of Roddy out of the memory of her father. She is able, through her contact with the land, to confront her fears and marry Roddy, carrying out her father's interrupted journey, realizing both his and her own unfulfilled potential.

In Love Passed This Way, the melodramatic elements of death and murder also affect the life of the creative female. Minella Hanks' father, James, is a ne'er-do-well farmer, sacrificing everything for his experiments with wheat. When a hailstorm destroys his final experiment, he goes to the bank manager to extend his loan. Refused, James strikes the manager, believing that he has killed him. In his flight, James is caught in a tornado, but his daughter discovers him before he dies. He tells her of his crime and warns her to leave town. Driven by the memory of her father's crime (the blow was not, however, fatal, as is revealed later) and by the desire to realize his dream of a new and better life, Minella, somewhat unconvincingly, changes her name and becomes a successful novelist. But, like Autumn and Silver, she is led to confront the crime that led her to deny the love of York Clifford and, marrying him, she helps him to carry on his wheat and cattle experiments while she continues her writing.

In all three novels, death is both destructive and creative, for while it results in the actual destruction of James Hanks and Jim Grenoble, and the metaphorical destruction of Jarvis Dean, it also serves to enable the vital male and creative female to carry out the unfulfilled potential

of the female's father, as well as to realize their own potential, although in a somewhat formulaic fashion.

The figure of the father and the nature of his crime are a convenient backdrop against which the central figures are explored, as distinct from the father figures of previous works, where he has a continuing central role in the integration of personality. As with works previously discussed, the central male and female figures suffer the consequences of the father's crime, which turns out not to be a crime in the legal sense at all, perhaps representing a development of Ostenso's vision in the direction of irony. However, because the crime is not a genuine one, the focus shifts to the figures themselves who go through a period of denial, caused by the father's supposed crime, in which they come to realize their separate and joint individuality. Through these two figures, the theme of destiny and fulfillment are manifested and developed, and in their lives is seen the operation of the potential of the life-force in its positive aspect only, as opposed to the conflict of opposite aspects of the force which operates in the other groups of novels.

Central to both figures is their connection with the life-force, manifested in three ways: their physical characteristics, personality traits, and reactions to their physical environments. Physically, both are complementary: they are respectively young and old, and have complementary hair and eye coloring. For example, Silver has "pallid hair and skin"³ and Roddy has dark hair and gray eyes, while Minella and York have the same coloring as Silver and Roddy, only in reverse.

There is a pairing of personality traits as well: they are strong-willed, well-educated, and creative--the male in terms of agriculture, and the female in terms of the arts. The paucity and rather predictable balancing of these physical and psychological characteristics is the result of their having been used so often before, and express Ostenso's heavy reliance on these elements for purposes of characterization. Yet there is a development in these works, for the most important parallel between these two figures lies in their more personal and less ancestral involvement with the physical environment. It is an involvement which makes them destined for each other and enables them to become fully integrated personalities. Each of the female figures reacts to the land in essentially the same way: they regard it as their birthright because they are, in effect, the spirit of the land. Minella typifies this reaction when, returning to her father's land, she says, "if the land is in your blood you can never be free of it".⁴

The essentially spiritual response which the land evokes in the creative female figure finds its counterpart in the physical response which the land evokes in the vital male figure. Each male figure experiments with the life of the land, creating new varieties of vegetable and animal life. This is part of the realization of the creative potential of the life-force which the father of the female figure left unfulfilled, and which she, being a woman, could not fulfill. Roddy typifies this physical connection when he feels that he is "big and silent and awkward, just as the land was, and it was as vain for him to try to dissociate himself from it as to separate himself from his own body" (TAAAY, 48-49). Thus the union of the male and female figures represents the union of

the body and the spirit of the land, and on a realistic level, is more convincing than the coming together of Luce and Karen of The Dark Dawn, which is based on the notion of some vague spiritual affinity between them.

The themes of the integration of personality and of destiny are further underlined by the parallel nature of the lives of the central figures, for each undergoes a similar development of his personality, which begins and ends with the actual or metaphorical death of the creative female's father. In Prologue to Love, the central fact of the existence of Autumn and Bruce is the death of Geoffrey in a gully, which causes Jarvis' metaphorical death through his withdrawal from working his land and exercising his responsibility as a father. While this death gives both Autumn and Bruce the opportunity to develop apart from one another, instead of being diverse, their development is parallel.

On her return from her trip abroad, Autumn discovers that she is "her own mother over again" (53), and appears to Bruce's mother as "Millicent", just as Bruce appears to Jarvis to be "Geoffrey Landor himself" (173). This linkage, because it is expressly stated rather than implied in the framework of the novel, as in The Stone Field, for example, weakens the novel, a weakening which is somewhat underlined by the coincidence that Autumn and Bruce first meet at the very gully where Geoffrey was killed, and where, subsequently, almost all the crucial meetings between them occur.

Their initial union is short-lived, however, for Autumn, discovering her father's crime, naturally feels that she must deny her love for Bruce. And Bruce, bewildered by Autumn's attitude, feels that

"henceforth, Autumn Dean and he would take their separate ways" (181). Yet in spite of Autumn's denial and Bruce's frustration, both realize that they are not "independent selves" but "two beings, each incomplete without the other" (128), because their love is an "inevitable and inexorable predetermination of the life that Jarvis Dean's opposition could neither change nor destroy" (161).

In their period of separation, both Bruce and Autumn are tested. Bruce carries the news of Jarvis' death to Autumn, discovers her with another man, and experiences the jealousy and rage which both Jarvis and Geoffrey felt when Geoffrey was killed. Autumn is given a letter, revealed at the appropriate moment, which her dead mother wrote to her, and in which she reads, "neither your father nor Geoffrey Landor was to blame in the unfortunate accident that took Geoffrey's life" (236), as well as her mother's hope that she and Bruce might become friends. Her denial of love tested by this revelation, Autumn realizes that "'there's nothing anyone can do--about me...except myself'" (263).

Both Bruce and Autumn come to realize that the crime of the past has little bearing on their lives except in that they, as lovers, are "the effectuation of that destiny which had begun in [Millicent] and Geoffrey" (237). They therefore return to the beginning of their relationship, a beginning which gave them life as separate individuals at the same time as it made them parts of the same personality.

There's Always Another Year is also structured on the principle of parallelism, but whereas in Prologue to Love the lives of the central figures were synchronized in terms of their development, here there is

a time lag between the lives of Silver and Roddy, necessitated by the shift in the nature of the crime which binds them together. There are actually two crimes which connect them: the death of Jim and their common error in succumbing to the purely physical appeal of another. Roddy sees Jim's death as the end of his ambitions, for he believes that Silver will sell the farm. On the other hand, Silver sees Jim's death as her opportunity to reclaim "whatever had been beautiful and unmarred in the spirit of Jim Grenoble" (58), as well as to erase the memory of Gerald Lucas, her former lover, in her return to the land. Corresponding to Lucas is Roddy's wife, Corinne, whom he married because of her sexual attractiveness.

Roddy and Silver, then, are pursuing inversely parallel lives, but in the crises in which they are involved, they come to a discovery of their true identities since these crises have as their common core the central facts of their existence: Jim's physical death and their capitulation to physical desire, a kind of spiritual death. They are finally able to overcome the obstacles preventing them from marrying, the problem of the land being settled by their mutual recognition at a barn dance, where Roddy "felt as though he had taken on the nature of the earth itself...aware of Silver as an aura that clung to his rugged body" (135-36), and where Silver "knew now for a certainty--that she loved him" (136). The problem of the capitulation is conveniently solved when Corinne runs off with Lucas, who is in the neighborhood to establish a hunting lodge.

As with the other male and female figures, York and Minella of Love Passed This Way pursue parallel lives which begin and end at the

same point: Minella's father. Their first meeting is startlingly brought about by her father's drunken oration at the school's graduation ceremonies, where Minella falls in love with York. Their potential love is denied, for again, Minella's father, who brought them together, drives them apart. Minella, believing her father a murderer, leaves town, and York naturally turns to the daughter of the dead man. But although physically separated, York and Minella are always in one another's thoughts. Almost every significant event in Minella's life makes her think of York, and York contacts Minella three times after she leaves. Minella compensates for her loss of York by becoming a successful novelist, while York turns with equal success to hybrid wheat and cattle breeding. The juxtaposition of the vital male and creative female figures in these works may seem more contrived than in The Stone Field, for example, where Jo comes to work for the Hilyards and gradually becomes a fit companion for Royce, while Royce slowly comes to recognize that both Jo and his farm are indispensable to him as a fully integrated individual.

Nevertheless, the theme of destiny and of the integration of personality are pursued with some variation. There are significant shifts in the causes of the development of the vital male and creative female figures. It can be seen that the lives of these figures are a further extension of what they were presented to be in the works discussed in previous chapters, in that their spiritual link with the land is now made more explicit. In There's Always Another Year and Love Passed This Way, they are more independent of the lives of their families and of one another. In these two novels, Ostenso's final exploration

of the central figures is characterized by the fact that they are less determined either by their blood inheritance or by historical necessity and more determined by their individual personalities and their natural love of the land. They are thus destined to be joined because they are born out of and live in close contact with the same influences which they repeatedly encounter and overcome, but the emphasis is placed increasingly upon their efforts as separate individuals, rather than as inheritors of the past or as co-workers.

The integration of personality is once more connected with the image of the land, but the image is drastically modified in these works. It has two basic characteristics: as the repository of spiritual strength, it is the place where the central figures go to obtain the peace of mind necessary to carry on their struggle for individuality. As the objective manifestation of the life-force in its exclusively positive aspect, it is the place where the figures unite. In Prologue to Love, the gully where Geoffrey died is the place where Autumn and Bruce repeatedly meet, and the place where they separately and jointly go to work out their problems. Similarly, in There's Always Another Year, the land is the place where Silver goes to escape her past life, and the place where Roddy goes to escape his wife. In Love Passed This Way, the land provides both York and Minella with the opportunity to fulfill themselves. For all these figures, the land "held the very roots of [their] being" (TAAAY,59), for "if the land is in your blood you can never be free of it" (LPTW,48). The destructive aspect of the land, which gave power to the works discussed in previous chapters, disappears

here, representing a change of emphasis in Ostenso's vision. Elsewhere, the integration of personality, to be effective, depends upon the conflict of opposites and not merely the existence of complementary, parallel characteristics of the central figures. In her attempt to concentrate on the development of the individual in these works, a psychologically sound idea in itself, Ostenso lacks an effective technique.

Through the dream imagery, the themes of loneliness and fulfillment are reinforced. These are both the most successful and the most excessive images in these works. Each work is a dream world in itself, in which the nightmare of loneliness and the dream of fulfillment exist in the mind of the creative female, and through the conflict of these dreams, she comes to realize the dream of fulfillment promised by the vital male figure.

Prologue to Love begins with Autumn having escaped from the "constant reliving of a nightmare" (9) which she found in Europe after World War I, only to return to another nightmare, her father's desire to have her leave at once, prompted by his fear that she will discover his crime, a fear which becomes an "unfathomable dread which wove itself into her dreams" (25). Escaping from this nightmare into the "silver spell" of the ravine, Autumn meets Bruce and goes to visit his mother who sees Autumn as the reincarnation of the destructive Millicent.

Her initial dread becomes a "feeling that some curse had been laid upon her" (51), Autumn moves about "under a black spell that was as unreal to her as a delirious dream" (51), intensified by the "enchantment" (96) she feels when her father tells why she cannot realize her

dream of fulfillment in the love of Bruce. Eventually, Autumn is able to see that only she has the power to break the spell which keeps her from Bruce, and makes her dream of living with Bruce a reality.

There's Always Another Year also begins in a dream, Silver emerging from the "spell of the night" (8) and returning to the home of her parents, the "sphere of enchantment, of dreamlike continuity" (59) of the land. She slowly concretizes the dream of fulfillment associated with her father's desire to return to the land, and at the same time she obliterates the nightmare of Gerald Lucas by passing into the "white dream" of her strengthening union with Roddy. She comes to realize that her former life was the unreal nightmare and that her life with Roddy is the real dream, a "spell of awe and wonder" (267).

The themes of loneliness and fulfillment are united in Love Passed This Way in the image of the dream Minella has, a dream born of the "loneliness and young pain" engendered by the interruption, in the nightmares of a hailstorm and a tornado, of the "fruition of a man's long and passionate dream" (61) of creating a hybrid wheat. Out of that nightmare, Minella fashions a new life in New York, becoming a "mermaid in a trance" (139), an unreal person in an unreal world. Out of this same nightmare, Minella writes a play which is not only her life's story, but it is the fulfillment of her dream of creating a new life for herself after her father's death. Watching her play "as if she were in a dream" (202), Minella sees it as the manifestation of the life she attempted to deny and returns to that life, marrying York and realizing both her father's dream and her own.

The dreams which Minella has are at one and the same time the manifestations of her loneliness and the cure of that loneliness. This is ultimately the significance of the dreams of all the creative female figures, for their nightmares of loneliness produce their dreams of fulfillment, and it is their responsibility to concretize both nightmare and dream to come to realize that both are necessary for the achievement of the integration of personality. It is possible that the dream imagery is intended to take over the negative function of the land in the integration of personality, as is the case in the novels considered in previous chapters. Psychologically, the dream image is an apt one in this connection, but it loses the power of the negative aspect of the land, with which the dream image has always been connected. Consequently, although the use of the dream image in these works is a major development in Ostenso's investigation of the theme of the integration of personality, it lacks the force to compensate for the shift from the dual nature of the land image.

The figures with which we have been dealing represent the culmination of Ostenso's investigation of the problem of the integration of personality and the operation of the life-force. This is evident in the development from Prologue to Love through to There's Always Another Year and Love Passed This Way which can be traced through the figures of the father and the vital male and the creative female, as well as through the structural and thematic content of the works.

Of primary importance is the figure of the father, whose life represents the unfulfilled creative potential of the life-force, as

is evident in the progression from Jarvis' withdrawal from his ranch to Jim's leaving his farm but intending to return, culminating in James' unfinished experiments with wheat. Connected with this progression is the decreasing severity of the father's crime, which shifts from the implication of responsibility for murder in Jarvis' case, to the illegal operations of Jim, to the mere fit of anger of James. Correspondingly, there is a progression from Jarvis' suppression of his daughter's love, to Jim's allowing Silver to channel her development for the wrong reason. The death of the father at an increasingly early period in the creative female's life further underlines the growing responsibility of the individual for her own development.

Within the figures of the vital male and creative female, there is a development which reinforces the concept that both are facets of one personality. In Prologue to Love, both figures lead parallel lives in the present, undergoing the same crises and developing in much the same way. This parallelism, continued as a structural device in There's Always Another Year, has more psychological reality here because the development of the two figures is separated by a gap between their respective stages of development. In Love Passed This Way, not only is this parallel development separated by physical space and is gauged by brief encounters only, but it is separated by the fact that each figure develops his personal identity independent of the other, a further refining of psychological reality.

There is also a growing concern with free will in an apparently deterministic environment. In Prologue to Love, Autumn and Bruce are basically playing out the interrupted love affair of their respective

parents. Contrastingly, in There's Always Another Year, Silver and Roddy are bound to be united because of their common interests. In Love Passed This Way, the bond is even less circumstantial, becoming something which is "in the blood", a natural love of the land. Thus free will finally depends on the personality itself.

In the imagery of the novels, there is less concern with the land as a destructive force, probably because it is so closely identified with the central figures. For this reason, the image of the land is less dramatic in these novels, whereas conflict is intensified, with less success, in the dream imagery.

There is a general reduction in the number of images used to convey theme and delineate character, in favor of the concentration on two basic image patterns. Perhaps this indicates that Ostenso's vision is wearing thin, for she is forced to rely upon plot manipulations and rather effusive treatments of these images in order to develop her themes. Yet this reduction does help focus attention upon the essence of these works: the individual must solve the problem of the integration of personality within himself, as free of superfluous external influences as possible, concentrating only upon those elements of his psychological, social, and physical environments which contain the basic keys to his individuality. Although this means that the novels lose power and descend to the level of formula writing, it also means that they are not total failures, for they do carry on the investigation of Ostenso's basic thematic concerns.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters of this essay, I have dealt with all the novels and a few of the short stories of Martha Ostenso, grouping them with respect to their plot structures and dominant time orientations, and demonstrating how the works within these groups are related by common themes, figures, images, and structural patterns. By way of concluding this analysis, I shall now deal with Ostenso's limitations and accomplishments, in order to evaluate her as a North American writer.

Ostenso's major limitation is that of repetitiveness in plot, theme, image, and character. This is the kind of fault upon which reviewers and critics have concentrated, and which they cite as a reason for considering her as an inferior writer. I concur with them that it is a fault, which appears, at its worst, in the last group of novels considered. This repetition does make her works tedious, and is attributable, in large part, to the demands of a popular audience. But as the analysis contained in the preceding chapters demonstrates, this repetitiveness is an integral part of Ostenso's vision of the life-force, being one of the means by which it operates. Furthermore, it is a device which helps to make her works an organic whole, and since different perspectives are given to this device in each of the groups considered, repetitiveness in Ostenso's work is not merely a sign of formula writing of the calibre of Erle Stanley Gardiner, although that element is certainly present.

Ostenso relies heavily upon patterns of character, image, and structure. Coincidence plays a large part in the works, straining the reader's credibility as well as the novel's structure. Contributing to this reliance upon patterning instead of exploration and development is the fact that the locales of her novels change very little: the farm and the small town are her major concerns, and even her brief forays into the city in The Sunset Tree and Love Passed This Way, for example, ultimately lead back to these locales. In addition, the relatively small number of central characters in the works, a function of the restricted locale, necessitates a certain amount of patterning, justifying to some extent the charge that Ostenso uses "stock" characters, images, and plots. But on the other hand, this patterning is a strength, for in her best works, such as The Waters Under the Earth or The Stone Field, the patterning grows directly out of the actual environment of the works and is an integral part of their vision, a point which will be dealt with in greater detail below.

Stylistically, the works are flawed in that there are shifts in tone corresponding to the shift from purely descriptive writing to the analysis of character and event. Whenever Ostenso describes a natural scene, the language is lyrical, almost poetic; whenever she describes the significance of a scene, a character's motivation, or an event, the language becomes formal or "highfalutin", to use King's phrase. The excesses of this flaw disappear as Ostenso matures, but it is present in all her works, and in the last group of novels in particular. This flaw can be attributed to several sources. Ostenso began as a poet and never lost this sensibility, being more at home in almost poetic

descriptions of natural scenes than in analytical discussions. Furthermore, this shift can be seen in several female writers, such as the Brontë["] sisters, and even in a writer like Hardy. In addition, Douglas Durkin, Ostenso's husband, edited most of her work, and from my personal reading experience of both Durkin and Ostenso, as well as from my personal contact with Durkin and Ostenso's family, these shifts described I am prepared to attribute to this kind of collaboration. Finally, there is the question of the audience, which was largely middle class, for she published in many popular magazines of the time. The annoying analytical passages could have been written for an audience which demanded detailed explanations of the significance of various scenes and events.

Although she transcends these limitations in her best work, it must be said that several of her novels are, in effect, formulaic. A brief glance at the overall development in her works will illuminate many of the reasons for Ostenso's limitations in greater detail and will, at the same time, demonstrate her accomplishments and lead to an evaluation of her as a secondary novelist of some stature.

In her works as a whole, there is a development from one group to another which is not chronological; rather, it is a development of thought. The bulk of Ostenso's novels consists of a consideration of the tyrant and guilt figures, where the emphasis is upon the denial of the creative potential of the life-force and the effect it has on the development of the individual, especially the vital male and the creative female figures. This crime assumes large proportions, involving

whole communities, but it eventually comes to be accepted as part of the life-force and finally, in A Man Had Tall Sons, it is seen to be a necessary instrument of that force. One of the strongest points in Ostenso's works is her powerful treatment of the stultifying Puritan element in the Midwest, and of the strong-willed pioneer and his world. In large part, these themes determine the success of Wild Geese, The Waters Under the Earth, The Young May Moon, and O River, Remember!

In these works, the vital male and the creative female are seen to develop alone during their childhood and adolescence, and their functions, as adults, is the reaffirming of the denied potential through their remaking of the tyrant's choice. In their efforts, the sexual counterpart of each figure is the reward for the achievement of individuality, a rather simple view of interpersonal relations, which contributes to the sentimental aspect of many of these novels. This view matures further as the works in the groups dealing with the tyrant figure progress, losing its mechanical nature and becoming an organic principle in O River, Remember! and A Man Had Tall Sons, where the various choices of the older and younger generations contribute to the development of each individual.

The novels concerned with the mythic pattern of decline, fall, and regeneration demonstrate a shift in focus, for the crime of the father is seen to be a thwarting or misdirecting rather than a denial of creative potential in the vital male rather than the creative female figure, and the crime is more easily seen as part of the life-force because of the concept of atonement. In these works, the vital male and the creative female develop together, each undergoing a period where the

negative elements of the personality are purged. The sexual counterpart of each figure is not only the reward for, but in part the means to, the development of individuality, which is psychologically a more mature view of interpersonal relationships than that posited in the tyrant novels.

In the works dealing with the vital male and the creative female figures, which comprise the bulk of Ostenso's magazine fiction, the crime of the father is not a crime in a legal sense, but rather an interruption of the fulfillment of the creative potential of the life-force. Because the crime of the father is neither a denial nor a thwarting of the life-force, the role of the vital male and the creative female in realizing their separate identities is particularly emphasized. However, it is here that the limitations of the popular romance restrict what could have been the most psychologically mature vision of the development of personality.

Nevertheless, it is possible to see that all the works, taken together, form an organic whole. Each group considers, in turn, the role of the family, the role of the family and the individual, and finally, the role of the individual himself in achieving the integration of personality.

There are two possible ways of looking at Ostenso's vision, one suggested by Frederick Hoffman in The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade, and the other suggested by Northrop Frye in Literary History of Canada. Each view points to both the limitations and accomplishments of Ostenso's work, particularly with respect to its

locales. Hoffman discusses such novelists as Floyd Dell, Glenway Wescott, Willa Cather, and Zona Gale, who use what he terms the "Midwest metaphor", perhaps better termed the Midwest formula, a general pattern of action which operated for the writers he discusses. In Hoffman's summary of the formula's characteristics,¹ he mentions many of the figures and patterns which also inform Ostenso's works. Among these are the hero who grows up on a farm or small town, "discovers his parents, realizes them as an alien, elder generation" (370), and who then "proceeds along two lines of education.... He is forced to obey the tradition of the fathers; he searches for another tradition" (370). Thus far, Hoffman's analysis can be applied to Ostenso's treatment of the tyrant and patriarch figures, and implicates the figures of the vital male and the creative female.

He goes on to discuss the "'sympathetic souls': a school teacher perhaps, an aging or defeated musician or sculptor; an 'intellectual' (often a lawyer, doctor, a professional of some sort, rarely a minister); or a girl who is vaguely dissatisfied with the choices available of her" (370), who are catalysts in the life of the hero, like Doctor Muller of The Dark Dawn, Professor Mueller of The Mandrake Root, Lind Archer, the schoolteacher in Wild Geese, The Stone Field, and O River, Remember! in particular, merely "sympathetic souls", purely external influences on the hero, but heroes in their own right, for they are the vital male and creative female figures. Ostenso is therefore not merely using the formula in her best work, but is both developing it and exploring its possibilities.

Another way in which Ostenso differs from those who use the

Midwest formula is that whereas such writers as Anderson and Wescott see the hero as leaving the Midwest permanently, rejecting it almost completely, Ostenso sees him as leaving temporarily, as in the novels dealing with the pattern of decline and fall, in order to develop his personality to the point where he can--and must--return to the Midwest in order to complete the development of his individuality, for he is part of that region. In the group of novels considered in Chapter Four, the return to the Midwest could be interpreted as a form of parochialism, insofar as the urban world is degraded in favor of a sort of pastoral, highly moral world which is the only place where the individual can fulfill himself. The formula thus turns in on itself, becoming a highly sentimental romance. When, however, Ostenso examines the rural world in her novels dealing with the tyrant and patriarch figures, the sentimental, parochial element is to a degree mitigated because both the urban and rural more actively contribute, in their positive and negative aspects, to the development of the hero.

Hoffman goes on to note that "like any other, this metaphor can easily become trite through constant repetition" (373), a charge which, as we have seen, has some truth in it with respect to Ostenso. Yet what ameliorates this triteness is the fact that Ostenso deals positively with the three interrelated facets of the Midwest formula contained in each of the groups of novels discussed. Also, it may be said of Ostenso, as Hoffman writes of Zona Gale, that she "loved the Midwestern metaphor...a quiet, inconspicuous, but genuine small-town culture" (375). While Ostenso too refused to repudiate the Midwest in such novels as The Stone Field, The Mandrake Root, and A Man Had Tall

Sons, her small-town culture as explored through the Midwest formula is balanced most effectively with the larger urban culture. The theme of the integration of personality transcends the parochialism of Prologue to Love, for example, where Europe appears to be the home of coquettes and neurotics, while the Okanagan Valley is the only place of fulfillment.

And like Gale, Ostenso developed the formula with what Hoffman calls a "human metaphor, not especially linked to its regional origins" (376). This "human metaphor" is, in Ostenso's case, the image of the land as both shaping force and metaphor of the fully integrated personality, which rises above the "distortions in literary applications, whether for polemical or for purely satirical purposes" (377). These distortions Hoffman sees as afflicting some writers, like Edith Wharton, who use the formula without knowing anything of the reality on which the formula is based. Ostenso's novels are weakest when the land ceases to be a fully developed "human metaphor", for in those works, her rural vision is sentimentalized into little more than an expression of nostalgia for a lost pioneer world. In Prologue to Love, Love Passed This Way, and even The Mad Carews, there is an evasion of the full reality of the natural world; the land loses its destructive aspect and becomes a haven of wish-fulfillment for the central figures, a place where they can find their perfect mate. Ostenso is more effective when she recreates the milieu of the pioneer as in O River, Remember! or Wild Geese. The story of Magdali Wing's ruthless struggles with the land in the 1870's contains a more convincingly developed tension than Silver Grenoble's sentimental attachment to her father's property.

The regional formula such as Hoffman discusses is at its best when it can be seen as a manifestation of the more universal "human metaphor", a term which Frye, in his discussion of Canadian literary preoccupations with the frontier, expands to "pastoral myth".² Close to its centre, he says, "is the sense of kinship with the animal and vegetable world" (841). In Ostenso's works this is transformed into an identification of the tyrant figure, as well as the vital male and creative female figures, with their natural environment. Thus it may be said that the pastoral idea is responsible for the patterning of her novels.

The danger inherent in pastoral, Frye goes on to point out, is that sentimentalizing of the myth "increases the feeling of separation between subject and object by withdrawing the subject into a fantasy world. The genuine myth, then, would result from reversing this process. Myth starts with the identifying of subject and object, the primary imaginative act of literary creation" (842). The group of novels dealing with the vital male and creative female figures where the farm is the centre of their universe suggests to the critic something of a sentimental evasion. Silver and Autumn settle down in a fantasy world because of a refusal to face existence outside the rural womb: the popular romance formula prevails. Elsewhere Ostenso does maintain the identity of subject and object. In her most successful novels, such as O River, Remember! Wild Geese, and The Waters Under the Earth, as well as in A Man Had Tall Sons and The Stone Field, the central characters are intimately linked with the land which operates as reality and metaphorical extension.

Frye also discusses the terror inherent in the individual's reaction to the dangers, discomforts, and mysteries of nature, the terror "of the soul at something that these things manifest" (830). In the best of her works, Ostenso admirably demonstrates the ways in which man encounters such fears. It is precisely the ability to internalize the complexities which arise out of involvement with the external wilderness which enables man to develop to his fullest capacity. On the other hand, men like Caleb in Wild Geese are ultimately conquered by the terrors of the soul manifested through nature, for instead of using the land to develop themselves and others, they use it as a means of subjecting others to themselves, and in fact see it as an emblem of their power to conquer. Thus the destructive element of the land takes over both Caleb and his victims, as Lind says, "the Gares...all have a monstrously exaggerated conception of their duty to the land--or rather to Caleb, who is nothing but a symbol of the land" (WG, 105).

Thus it may be seen that while Ostenso's vision is limited to a specific type of locale on the realistic level, in her best work this limitation neither denies its validity nor affects its universality. Through the combination of the Midwest formula and pastoral myth, the regional concentration on the Great Plains area is transcended because through it she explores one of man's central concerns: the integration of personality. Ostenso is not a major writer, but she is a part of the literary climate of the 1920's, which was concerned with exploring the last frontier and the rural community of its time. In this respect she has much in common with Willa Cather, Sherwood Anderson, Zona Gale,

Glenway Wescott, Frederick Philip Grove, and Ole Rølvaag.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE:

1. Pacey, Creative Writing, 203.
2. Ostenso, Wild Geese, ed. King, v.
3. Klinck, Literary History of Canada, 678.
4. Allen, Tradition, 90.
5. Pacey, 203.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 204.
8. Klinck, 678.
9. Overton, Women, 249.
10. Ostenso, viii.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Wallace, Review of The Stone Field, New York Times, Mar. 21, 1937.
14. Field, Review of The White Reef, New York Times, Nov. 4, 1934.
15. Dean, Review of Love Passed This Way, New York Times, Mar. 1, 1942.
16. Anon., Review of There's Always Another Year, New York Times, Oct. 22, 1933.
17. Klinck, 678.

CHAPTER TWO:

1. In addition to those cited here, the following works are part of this group but will not be considered, for reasons of clarity and space: "Eyes of Moonlight" and "Red Leaves Are Falling".

2. Ostenso, A Man, 235. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1958.
3. Ostenso, Wild Geese, 5. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1925.
4. Ostenso, The Waters, 39. All subsequent references are to the Grossett & Dunlap edition, 1930.
5. Ostenso, The Dark Dawn, 172. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1926.
6. Ostenso, O River, 353. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1943.
7. Ostenso, "Thousand", fol. 11. All subsequent references are to this MS.
8. Ostenso, Moon, 55-56. All subsequent references are to the Grossett & Dunlap edition, 1929.
9. Ostenso, Milk Route, 19. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1948.
10. Ostenso, Sunset, 18. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1949.

CHAPTER THREE:

1. In addition to those cited here, the following works are part of this group but will not be considered, for reasons of clarity and space: "Two Shall Be Born" and "Strange Woman".
2. Ostenso, Field, 18. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1937.
3. Ostenso, Reef, 58. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1934.
4. Ostenso, Carews, 181. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1927.
5. Ostenso, Mandrake, 39. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1938.
6. Ostenso, "Bridge", Pictorial Review, Dec. 1934, 8.

CHAPTER FOUR:

1. In addition to those cited here, the following works are part of this group, but will not be considered, for reasons of clarity and space: "Carnival Lady", "The Dreamer", "Gardenias in Her Hair", "The Lantern", "Last Mad Sky", "Madonna in Marble", "Prairie Romance", "Remembrance From America", "The Secret Heart", "Tonka Squaw", and "Tumbleweed". The majority of these are published short stories; a few are unpublished MS. The large number of short stories and novellas in this group can be attributed to the fact that the plot and characterization of this group lends itself most readily to magazine publication.
2. Ostenso, Prologue, 217. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1932.
3. Ostenso, Year, 8. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1933.
4. Ostenso, Love Passed, 148. All subsequent references are to the Dodd, Mead first edition, 1942.

CHAPTER FIVE:

1. Hoffman, The Twenties, 369ff. All subsequent references are to the Free Press edition, 1965.
2. Klinck, 840. All subsequent references are to the University of Toronto press edition, 1965.

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 - _____. "The Secret Heart", unpublished MS, n.d., 18pp.
 - _____. "The Odd Thousand", unpublished MS, n.d., 19pp.
 - _____. "Two Shall Be Born", unpublished MS, n.d., incomplete novel in two drafts: draft A, 36pp., and draft B, 22pp.
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